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1.Introduction

Being young, beautiful and active are certainly features that are well accepted and welcomed in most Western cultures. People, who are in the possession of these features, are gladly seen as part of society. But what about those people who are not in the possession of these features or may have lost them along the way of life. Some voices argue that beautiful people have many advantages over those who look rather mediocre or even ugly. An important question for this paper is, however, whether old people are perceived as beautiful or ugly, as contributors to society in many ways or as useless, as good natured or grumpy, in the opinion of others.

Language constitutes almost everything in life. A crucial question is whether the opinion about old people is made manifest in the language people use to refer to them. On the one hand, how language is used in which situations is as informative of the author or speaker and their personality, age, gender and other demographic features as their DNA or their fingerprint. On the other hand, language and its use both have a tremendous influence on readers' or listeners' attitudes and decision making. The statement of two almost synonymous sentences can mean something completely different, depending on the choice of punctuation, lexis and word order. The word *elderly* for example is used as an originally intended euphemism for *old*. However, nowadays it is not certain how euphemistic this term truly is. The mere fact that there is need for a euphemism already implies that there is a negative association with the concept behind it, namely age. We cannot simply call old people *old*, because it is often considered to be rude or inappropriate. Therefore we make use of other terms like *elderly*, *pensioner*, *retiree* or *senior citizen* among others. Furthermore it seems that when we talk about old people we frequently categorize them according to their age. What it is that makes people *elderly* and how we notice which people are in fact *elderly*, and furthermore in how far this preformed image of what 'being old' means, is applied to people at random, will be

discussed in this work. In addition to that it shall be investigated how texts shape societal attitude and how societal attitude shapes language use in different text types for which possible purposes.

As far as advertisement is concerned, there seems to be a more modern type of portrayal of old people. Old people are supposedly displayed as more active and more attractive, than many years ago. Whether this assumption is true, and whether it only happens in order to benefit from their purchasing power shall be discussed in this paper as well. Whether the recognition of old people as consumers has also influenced the portrayal as well as consequently the perception of them shall be found out in this paper. At least in advertisement, images of short pin curler hairdos for women above fifty that match an apron type of style seem to have vanished; and men around this age are nowadays rather portrayed as attractive, desirable men, than as old grandfatherly males. Whether possible changes can be seen as a result of a general change of attitude towards old people, and consequently a change of lexical choice and visual portrayal, and if this further leads to a change in attitude, can only be discussed after a more intensive investigation of a wider variety of texts than solely advertisements.

1.1. The Approach

To answer the questions that have been posed in the introduction and in order to answer further questions that may arise along the way, various aspects of language and language use will be inspected, in different text types from various sources using different methods. The purpose of approaching one issue in various ways makes sense insofar, as each method bears certain limitations, and therefore different ways of approaching provides a more complete picture than could be achieved with only one method. A short overview of how this will be done is provided in order to clarify the structure of this thesis.

1.1.1. The Crucial question

This paper aims at an investigation of the current situation of elderly people in Western societies, and whether there have been shifts in the perception and/or status of old people. In order to be able to get an impression of the current situation it is first of all necessary to deal with the status of old people in the past. Another area that will be dealt with is representation of old age in past and present. It will be explained what representation is, and possible changes in the representation of old people, either through language or other channels, such as visuals are followed up. Finally, one needs to ask the question whether it is sufficient to claim that the perception of old people within a society, and thus their status are influenced by the linguistic representation of old people, or whether the textual representation is not or only peripherally linked to societal attitude, but rather triggered by other factors. One of the hypotheses of this paper put forth that there is a difference in the collocations or co-texts and consequently the semantic prosody of the word *elderly* in different text types. This difference is assumed to be especially great between the language of advertisement and the language of other texts, such as spoken language, newspaper and magazine articles, academic texts and fiction.

However, I assume that the reader considers it to be logical that the language used in a specific text will always be adapted according to the purpose of the text and the intended audience. The simplest example would be the language used in children's books. Of course a fairy tale could be told in academic language. However, in that case the intended audience (i.e. children) would probably not understand a single word. Therefore style, register etc. are adapted to their abilities of understanding. Similarly, advertisements aimed at and created for elderly people that have the purpose of persuading the intended audience, will obviously use language that is not offensive to old people. The hypothesis is that one can find rather inclusive (e.g. *our* senior citizens) instead of exclusive (e.g. *the* elderly) language for products that are intended to be sold to old people. An insurance company for example might want to woo people to sign a contract, and adapt the language according to this purpose. However, it is also possible that the concept of age is used for other audiences in

advertisement, for example if a product for young people is advertised and works through ridiculing age. A newspaper article works differently from an advertisement, since its main purposes are to inform and to report, and therefore it will not necessarily aim at flattering old people. Even a non-linguist can normally clearly recognize what the purpose of a text is. There is no need for a detailed analysis to understand that there is a certain difference in styles and registers of language use depending on text type. It is common knowledge that legal texts are usually very complicated, or that nursery rhymes are usually rather simple. This thesis however attempts to investigate some of many differences in a more detailed manner, and will further question the influence that such differences might or might not have on societal attitude and opinion.

1.1.2. Hypotheses

My first hypothesis is that in the majority of text types, rather negative or neutral language is used to refer to age. This is especially true as far as collocations and co-text of the word *elderly* and semantically related words are concerned. Advertisements on the other hand use rather positive collocations and co-texts. Since collocations strongly influence connotations I assume that the word *elderly* has different semantic prosodies than other synonyms for *old*. I hypothesize that the semantically similar term *senior citizen(s)* possesses a more neutral or positive semantic prosody than the word *elderly*. Another hypothesis for this work is that the amount of respect shown to old people by other society members is not necessarily linked to regions, nations or cardinal points as the stereotypical examples East and West, but is quite similarly distributed around the world.

1.1.3. Brief Outline and Overview

The first part of this diploma thesis (chapter 2) will serve to provide an overview of the current situation of elderly people around the world and especially of those living in Europe and the United States. In chapter 2 the notion and importance of 'the elders and their wisdom' is discussed. The same chapter further provides a brief historical overview, discusses possible cultural differences and changes, as well as potential shifts in the perception of elderly people in society. Further, there will be a brief discussion about longevity and pension age and finally an analysis of elderly people within the family context is provided. Since every chapter of this work deals with more or less separate fields of literary or analytic areas, there will be a brief section winding up what has been said in each chapter before the next chapter starts.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to representation and the construction of identity, which are linked within and according to Paul du Gay's 'circuit of culture'. Also chapter 2 contains the outcome of literary research from mainly cultural studies, but also linguistic works. An overview about the functions of representation and how something or someone is represented will be provided. Certainly there will be some space given to language as a system of representation and how language is linked to culture. Theories of representation and the meaning of signs will be introduced and explained to serve as a preliminary preparation to understand the textual analyses. The second focal point of chapter 3, namely identity is attempted to be defined and related to age.

The fourth chapter deals with the corpus analysis of texts. *The Corpus of Contemporary American English*, which will be used in this study is introduced and briefly described in terms of size and categories. Additionally there will be some explanations about the search methods and finding of queries. Different types of collocates and co-textual items with the word *elderly* but also with synonyms or near-synonyms thereof, such as *pensioner*, *senior citizen* etc. will be the focus, in order to arrive at an outcome. The goal of the corpus analysis is to investigate if and in how far collocations and connotations are a reliable indicator of a society's attitude towards elderly people. The outcomes and their

relevance, conclusiveness or inconclusiveness, as well as attempts of interpreting the outcomes are discussed in chapter 5. There will also be one section of critically questioning the researcher's capability of interpreting results gained from corpus data, and finally the findings gained from the analysis are attempted to be interpreted as far as possible.

The 6th chapter contains a rather qualitative approach to advertisement language and semiological aspects of selected print advertisements, which also bears some difficulties that are mentioned, and attempts to relate the outcomes to the impressions gained from the corpus texts. Obvious and not so obvious differences will be highlighted in the end. Finally, a conclusion of literary and analytic outcomes is provided in chapter 7.

2.The current and past situation of elderly people

In order to begin the process of investigating what getting old means and how being old is perceived in Western societies, I would like to begin this chapter with a brief story that can probably be encountered in every country of the Western world that has a public transport system.

As a child raised in the 1980s and early 1990s, one of the main pillars in my upbringing was that one ought to be respectful to older people and especially to elderly people. Presumably, I was not the only person who was raised with this courtesy deeply anchored in my good-manner brain. Sayings like 'you must ask the elders' for advice often seem to have vanished in the brains of teenagers now. However, from time to time one can notice that there are still some adolescents who get up and offer their seat, as I have been told to do, to a frail old lady or an old gentleman on the tram. However, one can frequently notice how offended some people are when they are categorized as old although they might still feel young and active. Sometimes one can see a glance of pure

indignation in the face of the person who was offered the seat; or an expression saying 'what an impudence to think that a woman in her fifties needs a seat'; especially since she probably did everything she could to cover the traces of an ageing body.

Keeping this story in mind we will now move on to the underlying literature, which hopefully provides a deeper and more reliable insight in the perception of age. This chapter deals with the current situation of old people, as well as the history of their situation. Furthermore the chapter deals with the question what role old people have in societies nowadays and how these roles may have changed over time. Specific focus will be on the role of being a grandparent, what it means for the grandparent him or herself, and what it means for their children, their grandchildren and family as a whole to have grandparents.

2.1. Becoming old-a loss factor?

First of all it is necessary to get an impression of ageing and the attitude towards age and ageing around the world. Therefore I picked only some countries and regions I thought to be especially relevant and interesting for this work. Anne Davis Basting (1998 [2001]:1) states in her book *The Stages of Age-Performing Age in Contemporary American Culture* that "[f]or almost two centuries to become 'old' in the United States has been largely regarded in terms of loss". She further says (Basting 1998 [2001]:1) that

[to] become old is to lose beauty. To become old is to lose power, both financial and physical. It is to lose one's independence and to lose one's flexibility and potential for growth. And now, with the specter of Alzheimer's haunting those over eighty, to become old is to risk losing your very self.

Sadly, Basting might be partly right. However, I would like to add one more point on Basting's list of things to be lost when getting old: to lose respect of younger people. At the same time, I have to criticize Basting in one point, which

is that I believe it is wrong to make a unifying and general statement about all old people, or about an age group in general. Simply put, what might be true for some old people is certainly not true for all of them. I am convinced that there are many old people who clearly rule out the factors 'loss of flexibility' and 'potential growth'. The best proof is that quite a few pensioners study at universities, elderly people may also take part in various educational and training programs, or even take language courses, and the like. Another remarkable thing that has to be pointed out about Basting's quote, is that there is a quite obvious tendency to refer to old people in similar terms as many people refer to children, i.e. as a sexless and unified group. However, this is not the case when talking about middle-aged people. In the middle aged group there is usually at least the distinction between men and women. Certainly also in this case, it is often talked about *the men* and *the women*, throwing all of them in one pot gender wise, but at least this one distinction is made. One can come to the assumption that the gender/sex category is connected with fertility. In middle-age, i.e. as long as people are perceived to be roughly in or around the fertile age, it seems that the focus is on sex rather than on age. Before and after the fertile age, when referring to children and elderly there is obviously not so much need for gender/sex categories. Consequently one could dare to say that there might be a certain linkage between fertility and linguistic sexual distinction and categorization. This can be spun even further and one could then suggest that the explicit linguistic reference to sex/gender is linked to respectful behavior. However, the focus of this paper is neither on the middle-aged and adolescents, nor on children, but on old age and therefore, a brief discussion about old people and the history of respect for them is carried out in the next section.

2.2. The wisdom of the elders

Many words we use in our daily lives have become so habitual that we do not even think about their original meaning. I propose that one of these words is the word *senate*, which probably a high proportion of people has heard and most probably also used at some point in life, and still hardly anybody seems to be aware of its meaning. A *senate* has for many people become accustomed as

'something political'. However, to be clear a *senate* is, depending on its country, an organ that has, if not deciding power, at least an advising function. Although to be aware of what a *senate* is and what its functions are, still does not necessarily mean knowing what the word means. When consulting dictionaries in different languages, one will find diverging definitions, and even more differences concerning the etymology. According to the Latin-German dictionary by Stowasser et. al (1997:462-463) for example, the first meaning of "senatus, us" is German "Rat der Alten, Staatsrat, Rat" which is 'the council of the elders'. Another dictionary I scanned for the meanings of *senate*, the German *Duden-Das Fremdwörterbuch* (2005:946), mentions even before the first entry "lat. Rat der Alten". Other dictionaries such as *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1992 [1987]), the *Oxford English Reader's Dictionary* (1995 [1979]), and the *Langenscheidt's Pocket Dictionary of the English and German Languages* (1964 [1956]) do not mention anything about the 'council of the elders'. Certainly it cannot be considered a fact anymore that senates nowadays consist solely of a society's elders. Nevertheless it is exactly this change of facts that is astonishing and also very interesting in a linguistic aspect. It is quite obvious that even a council that owes its existence as a whole to the elders, and moreover used to consist of 'the elders' of a society has simply been restructured. The elders, in their function of spreading their wisdom and their experience, deciding for others or advising others in their decision making have been replaced by other, possibly younger people. It seems as if nobody is interested anymore in what the elders have to say. There is most likely a connection between the change of the senate's members and the dictionary entries. Descriptive dictionaries simply disregard the necessity of mentioning the original meaning of the word, since the word does not stand for a group of advising elders anymore. Metaphorically speaking, it can be assumed that the original ship's complement and their wisdom and knowledge that was once highly appreciated and welcomed, seems to be lost with all hands; and old age experience has almost vanished as a concept linked to the word 'senate'. One of many possible explanations for the repression of the elders and their wisdom could be the aging of society in general. Catherine Jones Finer states that:

the higher the proportion of elderly persons in the population [...] the less might be their rarity value as survivors and founts of wisdom, and the greater might be the perception of them as a burden" (In Bengtson et al. 2000:21).

Considering that humans usually desire most that what is rare, in many areas of life, it is a quite reasonable argument. Everything that has been discussed above rather creates the impression that the wisdom of the elders is rejected in times like these. Astonishingly, there is quite some evidence¹ that the advice of the elders is still sought by younger people and that it is not something which is completely outdated, as for example through numerous internet platforms that offer advice from old people. However, one needs to be aware that virtual behavior is often not the same as non-virtual behavior in particular situations. More clearly put: even people who ask the elders online may still be ignorant towards old people in real life. Apart from private persons in every-day situations, this ignorance might, by the way, also be found in politics when it comes to the needs and wants that the aged members of a society have.

1

Precisely the research I am referring to consisted of typing 'ask the elders' into *Google*TM and found approximately 2.620.000 hits on Austrian *Google*TM google.at, and approximately 833,000 results on the American google.com.

As you can see in Figure 1, the first entry is the *Elder Wisdom Circle*TM ¹, a website (<http://www.elderwisdomcircle.org/> July 3 2009) where

people in their teens, 20s, 30s, and beyond connect with Cyber-Grandparents for confidential, personal, and compassionate guidance. Ask our Elders for advice and get a FREE and PERSONALIZED e-mail response.

Many elders have a photo and a description about themselves online. Besides an 82-year-old man with the 'elder-name' "virtual granddad", many seem to be around 50 or even younger, unless there is deception involved. The next website that appears is <http://www.valleybible.net/ask.php> July 3 2009., which similarly offers advice for young Christians from elder Christians. Another example is *The Concord Insider* which seems to be an online magazine or the online version of a magazine, which includes a category "ask the elders:" (<http://www.theconcordinsider.com/article/ask-elders-friendly-neighbors> July 3 2009). Besides the many offers to ask the elders for advice gratuitous and in a manner that works similar to a forum, there is also a more mythical website (http://www.discharge-debt.com/Store2/index.php?main_page=index&cPath=67 July 3 2009). There you can ask the elders a question and receive a detailed reply for \$ 65.00 or a short question for \$ 50.00. You have to pay \$ 70.00 for an urgent question and \$100.00 for up to three questions¹ After you have asked and, I am quite certain, also after you have paid a person called

Chalon will connect with the Elders and provide you with what they have to tell you. The answers are not always what is expected because they have a far different perspective and way of thinking than we have.

However, we will now look at the situation of old people around the world, more specifically only in some countries or regions that seem to be either interesting in terms of comparison, or specifically interesting due to their uniqueness.

2.3. The meaning of being old in various areas around the world

In order to be able to speak about a shift in the perception of old age and consequently about shifts in representation of elderly people in the West, it is necessary to take a look at the history and current situation of old people in both Western and non-Western parts of the world beforehand. Additionally this is important in order to compare different times and cultures. As already mentioned above, Basting states that aging "has been [...] regarded in terms of loss" (1998 [2001]:1) in the United States for the last 200 years. Peter Laslett, who wrote in the 'preface' to another book, *Life, Death, And the Elderly- Historical Perspectives*, edited by Margaret Pelling and Richard Smith, which "originated in a conference [...] for the Society for the Social History of Medicine [...] in Oxford 1984" (Pelling & Smith 1991:1), filled sets the reader thinking about age, ageing and old people, or the elderly. Similarly to what has been stated above already, Laslett describes the biologists' view of aging people and describes that biologically speaking the elderly are humans after the era in which they serve the purpose of reproduction (Laslett in Pelling & Smith 1991:xiii). According to Laslett (Pelling & Smith 1991:xiii) they are biologically speaking:

[p]ackages which last longer and so get used for other things [and therefore] may have secondary value, but from the point of view of their original purpose they are inefficient.

With 'packages' he refers to 'people', which he has earlier compared to convenience food we buy in the grocery store and which is only "intended to last as long as it takes from the time that the food is encased until the moment we

eat it." (Pelling & Smith 1991:xiii). His main point can therefore be understood as the assumption that human beings obviously have an expiration date, which is often seen as the end of the reproduction age rather than the end of life. This again gives rise to the question how useful people past this reproduction stage are perceived within a society. Another interesting aspect would be to question whether the same label of disrespect or indifference, or simply categorization as being useless would be assigned to a young infertile person, if it was a known fact that the person is infertile.

2.3.1. Brief History of Age Perception

Pelling and Smith (1991:5) refer to J. McManner's *Death and the Enlightenment*, when they state that an "enhanced realization of age, time, and quantity" goes back to the time of enlightenment and industrialization. They further mention (1991:6) that one of the first instances where it became important to know how old a person was for military purposes, which can possibly be seen as having set a precedent for pension age in later years. According to Pelling and Smith and the *Statutes of Realm* (London, 1810: I, 307) "[t]he Statute of Labourers from 1351" discharges "persons over the age of 60 from service" in the "labour-starved period following the Black Death". Later, in the Elizabethan period in the 1550s there have been further exemptions, such as those that stated that men older than 60 and women older than 40 are freed from compulsory service (5 Eliz.c.4 R.H. Tawney and E. Power (eds.) in: Pelling and Smith 1991:6). They further state that in medieval England many communities did not require people over 60 to bring in the harvest. Furthermore, they believe that "[a]s the age structure of the population fluctuated, so must people's perception of old age, as it is doing under the changing demographic regime of the late twentieth century." (Pelling & Smith 1991:7). The reasons for this change in perception of age and the consequences shall be investigated and incorporated in an ongoing discussion throughout this paper. Because the reasons and consequences are estimated as being of different sorts, they will

be discussed where necessary and where relevant in direct context rather than in one single section in the underlying piece of work.

I strongly agree with Pelling and Smith's argument that the perception of old age has changed over time. A person in his or her mid-thirties is nowadays seen as being in the prime of life rather than in the autumn, as opposed to the views preceding the 20th century. One can also notice that topics like the pension age and its constant raising have been a current issue for quite a while in politics and the media around the world. This becomes evident when looking at media contributions from the last years. Since the media are a perfect mirror of what is or was going on in a specific society at a certain time, I decided to look at several articles from various online newspapers, in order to get an impression about the attitudes concerning pension age.

2.3.1.1.State of Media Discussion

In September 2000, there was already a *BBC news* debate about raising the pension age on the world wide web. The article "Should the retirement age change?" (BBC news online 2000) talks about a "pensions timebomb" and states that "Europeans are having fewer children, which means that within a generation there will be fewer workers, whose pay will be taxed to fund more pensions." According to the same article in the year 2000, the "average retirement age [was] around 65 for men and women. The lowest in the European Union is 59 for Italian women; the highest is 67 for Danish men and women". Five years later *The Independent* published an article and took "[a] look at pensions plans worldwide" (The Independent World [online] 2005) which provides an overview about pension ages and future trends, which in the case of Italy differ from that of the *BBC* article from the year 2000. According to *The Independent* the situation in 2005 was as follows: Russia's pension age was 60 for men and 55 for women. In Italy the pension age was supposed to be raised in 2008 from 57 to 60 for women and to 65 for men. Japan's retirement age was

low, with most companies setting the mandatory age at 60, but the rapid aging of society forced the country to make changes. From 2005 to 2015, the number of Japanese aged 60 or older will increase by about 7.25 million, while those between the ages of 15 and 29 will decrease by about 3.81 million. This would mean that one in three people will be over 60 by 2015. Last year, the government required companies to gradually raise the retirement age by 2013."In Greece, under the current system, the basic retirement age for men is 65 and for women it is 60". In Germany the age was considered to be raised from 65 to 67 for men, and Chile's retirement age is 60 for women, and 65 for men. Finally "France retirement age is 65 for the private sector, but varies in the public sector, depending on the profession".

In 2007 another article was published by the *BBC* ("Guide to Europe's pension woes"), which stated that most European countries have their pension age for men around the age of 65, the lowest having been Italy until 2008 with 57, and for women between 57 (also Italy) and 65. According to the *BBC* (2007), in Denmark

[i]n 2006, the so-called Welfare Agreement Act was passed in the Danish Parliament, Folketinget. The agreement means the retirement age will increase from 65 to 67. In order not to create financial insecurity for those affected, this will happen gradually, with an increase by half a year in 2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027. But it is in principle open-ended.

As far as the the United States of America are concerned, according to the *Social Security Factsheet* (<http://www.ssa.gov/pressoffice/IncRetAge.html> 3 July 2009) there have been the following changes:

The age for collecting full Social Security retirement benefits will gradually increase from 65 to 67 over a 22-year period beginning in 2000 for those retiring at 62. The earliest a person can start receiving reduced Social Security retirement benefits will remain age 62

.Finally in Japan, the retirement age was said to be quite low in 2004, when *The Japan Times online* published an article by Kaho Shimizu . (2004: 8 July). and stated that:

[i]n April 2001, the government raised the pension age for corporate employees to 61. The age will be raised by a year every three years until it reaches 65 in 2013

The whole pension debate that has been going on for the last couple of years around the world's developed countries is quite obviously linked to the always rising life expectancy (which is the result of a large number of various factors that will not be discussed in detail here). However, the debate is heavily influenced by the possible and better medical treatment and a general rise of prosperity in many, especially industrialized countries. The consequence is a decrease of fertility rates in Western countries, since the combination of prosperity and longevity together construct no need to rush with family planning. However, this is not only true for Western countries, but a quite prominent example for a tremendously decreasing birth rate is certainly Japan (Ogawa et. al. 2005:123-129).

2.3.2. The difficult task of defining old age

The process of investigating age, ageing or other areas that are connected with the latter two involves the necessity of defining what being 'old' is or what it means. The difficulty thereby is that it is not exactly an easy task to find a definition for being old. In search for clarity during the research for this paper, many articles, books and other publications that deal with many different age spans for old age have been consulted. However, the age that was most conspicuous in connection with old age was the age of 65.² Almost every author who writes about age, states that there is no exact definition of old age. Also

²Cf. For example Pelling &Smith 1991:1-39, Ogawa et. al. 2005:121-145

Bengtson et. al. (2000:3) open the first chapter of *Aging in East and West-Families, States and The Elderly*, with the realization that "what constitutes old age [...] [and] how [old people] are to be treated [...] have varied among societies over time". In India, at least if we consider the census data, old age is apparently defined as 60+ (Dandekar 1996:32). Finally, a statement about a time frame of old age in W. Andrew Aschenbaum's article "Ageing and Changing: International Historical Perspectives on Ageing" was found. He quotes Harris and writes that

[a]t least since 1700, written records in Europe and North America (such as laws, diaries and encyclopedias) have loosely placed the onset of old age chronologically at around 65, give or take 15 years either way .(Harris 1988 as quoted in Aschenbaum 2005:24)

If this is taken as a given fact, old age begins with the age of 50 at the earliest and begins with 80 at the latest. However, the question is then whether a person, who is already old at the age of 50, is then to be defined as something else rather than old after some time. Is there a specific time span in which one is old, as for example 20 years from the onset of 'old', and if so what is one defined to be after 'old'? Supposedly after 'old' comes 'very old', or 'ancient' or 'dead' or plain 'nothing', maybe even 'non-perceptible'. Considering the blurriness in definition attempts it is not surprising that also in dictionaries there is no exact age to be found when looking up *old*. Hence, there is also no exact age listed for the word *elderly*, as also Gerlinde Mautner (2007:51) states in her article "Mining large corpora for social information: The case of elderly". She writes that the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* describes *elderly* as "a polite way of saying that someone is old", and as Mautner further states "some dictionaries (e.g. *Concise Oxford*) claim "that *elderly* is a synonym for *old*". According to that, presumably not only 'being old' but also 'being elderly' comes to pass some time between 50 and 80. Hence one can surmise that we can never come to understand what or who is *elderly* if we cannot find out what or who is *old*. Therefore it should have become clear that both concepts are somehow interdependent and interrelated. *The American Heritage Dictionary* for example defines the adjective *elderly* (1992:591) as "being past middle age and approaching old age, rather old". According to this the concept *elderly*

cannot be described without the concept of *old*. *Old* is defined as "having lived or existed for a relatively long time, far advanced in years of life". Another definition in *The American Heritage Dictionary* is: "[h]aving or exhibiting the physical characteristics of age", which proves a clear link to the body and appearance of a person. However the definition immediately following the definition above is: "[h]aving or exhibiting the wisdom of age, mature". From these definitions it almost seems as if you had to choose whether old applies to a person's appearance and grey hair or to wisdom, instead of a combination of both. It is important to keep in mind that *The American Heritage Dictionary* is from the 1990s. I therefore also looked at an older dictionary, namely *Webster's New international Dictionary* from 1952. In this dictionary the main definition for *old* is simply "not young". Again this definition is problematic, because it rules out the chance that there is something in between old and young, and even if there was something it could not be defined more precisely than perhaps 'between young and old'. As can be seen, all definitions either exclude one another, or depend on one another in terms of relative meaning. Considering everything that has been discussed so far, I am of the opinion that there is neither a completely true, clear and satisfactory definition for *old* and *elderly*, nor is there a unique and true meaning for being old.

2.3.2.1 Tribal versus City life

When talking about aging many authors are in agreement that the concept of ageing is linked to industrialization and modernization processes, in both the East and the West (e.g. Bengtson et al. 2000:3-16, Pelling and Smith 1991:1-39) Indeed it is a quite logical point, given that for example indigenous tribes treat their elders in a much different way from Westerners. This is probably linked to the fact that they are either not at all, or extremely rarely in contact with the effects of modernization processes, as opposed to old people in industrialized areas. However, the absence of contact to industrialization for indigenous tribes is true at first glance, however, it is not true when it comes down to the effects of industrialization. Still, one should not forget that also

indigenous tribes, for example those of the Amazon or Native Americans in the United States, are often also much affected by industrialization, yet in a very different way than the urban population. Rooting out, invasion of the rooters and pollution as well as a worsening world climate because of the rooting, and consequently the necessity of wandering off are the kinds of struggle they face. Certainly pollution is also to be found in cities much more than in the Amazon, however, the significant difference between industrialization effects in cities and in the Amazon is that the indigenous tribes suffer almost exclusively from the negative consequences of industrialization, while urban citizens also enjoy the many advantages thereof. Comparing the two living situations it is also commonly said that the elders of indigenous tribes are much more likely to be still treated the same now, as they have been treated traditionally ever since. In urban areas, where people constantly have to adapt to new situations and innovations in various fields, as for example technical progress, medical progress and pension age, the treatment and perception of old people seems to change or adapt to the particular period. This again is linked to what has been introduced earlier about longevity and 'being rare'. In indigenous tribes medicines and ways of curing sick people will have remained roughly the same, while in the industrialized and civilized world there are constantly new methods and medications that make people live longer and longer. The longer people live, and the higher the number of old people, the 'less rare' aged people are in a society. As a consequence age and aged people are honored less and less the higher their number, which can be seen as a type of behavioral adaption to the circumstances. Logically, this would mean that societies with a high percentage of old people would show a drop of honor and respect for old age. In tribal life the number of elders is supposedly not much higher now than it has always been, assuming that their way of life and the outer circumstances have not changed as fast and as often as for urbanized societies. Still there is a widespread stereotype that honoring the eldest of a society is not only related to rural and urban areas, but that it is also a cardinal point related phenomenon, as for example Eastern versus Western cultures.

2.3.2.2. East and West

In Europe, or generally in the developed West, it seems there is a general assumption or stereotype that Eastern cultures still deeply honor their elders and do not care or worry about an ageing society. Kyong-Dong Kim utters the same opinion in more detail in "Cultural Stereotypes of Old Age" (Bengtson et al. 2001:227-242). He argues (2001:227) that leading a long and healthy life is certainly a value shared by all cultures, and therefore the natural consequence can only be to value elderly people. Kyong-Dong Kim further argues that old age must have been especially cherished in times when the life expectancy was not as high as it is today. Furthermore, Kyong-Dong Kim mentions (Bengtson et al. 2001:228) the "general belief that in the East old age has been revered" but thinks this might be linked to "the strong patriarchal tradition of the East" and the image of sages being old men. Aschenbaum, however, claims quite contrary that (Thang in: Aschenbaum 2005:21) "because age was critical in the Confucian world view, older women prevailed over their sons and daughters. Kim (2001:228) argues further that the West has a quite contrary stereotypical image to the East. For him it appears as if in the West rather young age and youthfulness seem to be honored and valued. Whether this is true or not it is certainly a widespread stereotype that does apply to the West at least to a certain extent. One has to be aware, however, that these are only stereotypes as also Catherine Joes Finer argues in her contribution "Aging in Industrial Societies, East and West: A Western Comparative Perspective" (Bengtson et al. 2000:18f.) She states that

[i]t is not only Western developed countries whose governments are expressing concern over issues to do with population aging. Eastern countries, both developed and nondeveloped, have similar concerns. Nevertheless it is still Western wisdom that tends to predominate in international debates; it is as if Westerners were still the experts in matters of statutory policy in this sphere, by virtue of seniority in the field-no matter how impressive or disappointing has been their example to date.

From this quote it becomes evident that population ageing is seen as a problem also in the East. A society that would deeply honor old people would never come to be in a situation as such, because a greater number of old people

would then be a great pleasure instead of a problem. Therefore it can be said that ageing is also seen as a problem in the East. Finer further states that "no country or culture is possessed of a monopoly of wisdom let alone of moral rectitude in respect to its elderly people" (Bengtson et al. 2000:19).

Another interesting aspect that was found in Kyong-Dong Kim's work, was his approach of investigating culture, which is quite similar to the approach that was chosen for the corpus analysis of the underlying work. However, instead of looking at linguistic corpora he chose to look at dictionaries as well as dictionaries of proverbs taken from the Korean (with respect to Chinese influence) and American languages, in order to find out whether the common stereotypes about cultures belonging to the East and West are true (Bengtson et al. 2001:229-238). He came to the conclusion that there are far more words and terms that describe unpleasant conditions of old age than vice versa (2001:233). Kim's conclusion (2001:235) is therefore as follows:

[N]egative descriptions were not only more numerous, but also more varied than positive descriptions[...].The aged persons are lonely, alienated, and ill-treated; their value in life deprecated; they become lazy and try to take it easy in work and in life; they become greedy, stubborn, senile and childish, and more. The general impression then is that old age and elderly people are not positively described or referred to in Korean sayings and proverbs.

As opposed to a more negative view of old age in the analysis of Korean proverbs and sayings, the American division between positive and negative expressions is almost even. Kim investigated that nevertheless the conceptions of both languages are similar, which leads him to surmise (2001:238) that "there must be common conceptions of age in most civilized societies". Also Peter Uhlenberg (2000:262) appears to share this view when he says that "[m]ost persons find it easy to produce a substantial list of word associations for the terms 'adolescent' or old 'person'. These "'associations' tend to be negative and reflect widespread age stereotypes". Kyong-Dong Kim, spins a thought similar to Uhlenberg's further and thinks that it is possible that the honorable

descriptions of old people were only true for the upper classes, but not for the masses (Kim 2001:230-235).

The next section deals with old people as grandparents and old people as contributors for the wellbeing of society, In other words the functions of old people in various areas of social life where we could barely do without them will be discussed.

2.4. The elderly as Contributors to society and family

As has already been pointed out, the ageing of society and the decrease in birth rates is a reality for many countries of the industrialized world. However, in this section the focus will not be on the apparent financial disadvantages and the supposed burdens for all the other people around the elderly, nor will it be on the problem of an ageing society in general. What will rather be approached is once again the factor 'urbanization' in connection with family structures. What is more, I want to depict, how family structures are affected by the general increase of the average life expectancy, and the usefulness of elderly people in general.

2.4.1. The elderly as care-takers

Contrary to the widespread assumption that old people are useless, strenuously stubborn, grumpy or simply senile, Kalache, Barreto and Keller (2005:38) share a view which also reflects my personal one, namely that the elderly make "innumerable contributions to their families, their communities and societies at large". Kalache, Barreto and Keller further provide evidence from the *WHO World Health Report* (1999) for the fact that in 1990s in the United States "there [were] over 3 million persons aged 65 and over actively involved in volunteer activities [...] in addition to many more millions of older persons providing 'informal' care in the community". What is more, one also has to point out the fact that many elderly spend their time with other activities such as giving

advice to younger people on internet forums as mentioned earlier. As far as home care is concerned, the authors state (2005:39) that the majority of caretakers is constituted by older women, especially in countries like Spain which is well known for certain family structures, as for example the homemaker woman caring for her and her husband's parents. Contrary to that the authors also argue that in countries which have a high mortality rate because of AIDS, as for example in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Asia, as well as on the Caribbean³ care taking is often the job of old people. Apart from care-taking there are numerous other activities with which old people engage in to make themselves useful for their families and also for their societies, one of which is fulfilling their role as grandparents.

2.4.2. Changes in the modern family structure – Grandparenthood and urbanization

Besides ageing there is another constantly increasing factor on our planet, namely urbanization. According to Montgomery et al. (2003) as stated by Kalache, Barreto and Keller (2005:39), in 1960 "30% of the world's population were living in urban areas". Following their account, this percentage increased to , 50% in 2005, and the estimate for 2030 is 80% of urban citizens. Although grandparenthood and urbanization may appear to be isolated phenomena, there is a crucial connection between them. An imaginary yet realistic and common example could be a family consisting of three generations that lives in a rural area. One of their biggest problems might very well be their financial situation caused by unemployment. The parents i.e. second generation are consequently forced to move to the next available urban center in order to find work. Thus they are forced to leave the children in the care of the grandparents. Another possibility would be to leave the old people, i.e. the grandparents

³ For a more detailed account cf. United Nations Population Division.1998.*Human development report 1998*. New York:Oxford University Press.

behind by themselves, which Kalache, Barreto and Keller (2005:39-40) argue is often the case.

According to Sarah Harper, the current "demographic ageing has significant implications on kinship roles" (Harper 2005:422). She states that modern European families as well as families in most Western industrial societies are "likely to be both multigenerational and slim" what again Bengtson et al. (1990) referred to as the "beanpole" family (Bengtson, source not clear from references of article 1990, 1985 or 1996). This family is characterized not only through being multigenerational but also through divorces and re-married family members. As far as grandparents are concerned, a child could easily have two grandmothers and two step-grandmothers, as well as two grandfathers and two step grandfathers, which makes eight grandparents as a whole; not to mention mother and father and their new spouses. Some children nowadays may have even more 'step-family members' if for example one or more first or second generation family member is divorced and re-married more than once. This can be spun almost endlessly, and additionally the more generations there are in a family, and the more 'modern' families become in terms of divorce and re-marriage, the higher the number of 'step-family members' as a logical consequence. Hence, the 'step-family' can become extremely large, provided that all members still talk to each other. This view is then contrary to what Harper (2005:426) stated about a 'slim' family nowadays being the most common and wide spread. Step family members might not be your own flesh and blood, yet they belong to the family at least in a legal sense. However, I regard it as highly improbable that all of the above mentioned 'step-family members' and their families and 'step-families' encounter each other very often in real life. Furthermore it seems highly unlikely that all of them create the picture of a true family or live together under one roof, or even have a very personal and intimate relationship in the first place. However, apart from the general tendencies in the development of family structures, we will now turn to the grandparents and their role within the modern family.

2.4.2.1 Grandparenthood

Grandparents have, as already pointed out, numerous functions for and within the family. Harper suggests (2005:426) that in case of divorce a close grandparent relationship may provide stability to both children and grandchildren, while a rather distanced relationship between grandparents, children and grandchildren may result in a breakdown of interaction between the third and first generation. She also cites (2005:426) that

Bengtson (1985) identifies [...] 'five separate symbolic functions' of grandparents: [1] being there; [2] grandparents as national guard; [3] family watchdog; [4] arbiters who perform negotiations between members; and [5] participants in the social construction of family history'.

Considering Bengtson's five functions it is interesting that the very first one simply implies that the grandparents' mere presence is of vital importance. Whether physically or symbolically is, as I understand it not the main point, but 'being there' in the sense of knowing that you can contact them anytime you like appears to be the crucial matter. The second function, as I came to understand it, being a guard of the culture of a nation, i.e. someone who shares the cultural heritage with the grandchildren. Bengtson's third and fourth function of grandparents are quite straightforward. The grandparents ought to act as the diplomats of the family, in whose 'office' all strings are pulled together if necessary, and the grandparents are also those family members who keep the family together. The fifth function is similar to the way I understand function two. The grandparents share their history, which then constitutes a certain feeling of heritage which influences the life of each generation that comes after.

In summary it became clear that the role of grandparents within a family is quite important, unless the relationship between them and their own children is disrupted so that there is no, or very little contact with their grandchildren. Harper (2005:426) even goes a step further and refers to her own (Harper et. al's) study of grandmothers, which was carried out in 2004 and which "identifies" the grandmother as:

carer, replacement partner (confidante, guide and facilitator), replacement parent (teacher and disciplinarian) and as family anchor (transferring values, attitudes and history).

Judging from my personal experience and more specifically from the relationship I had with my grandmother, I can only state that the functions of grandmothers as stated above definitely applied.

However, there might be a change in the role and function of grandparents due to many changing circumstances, such as raising of pension age and general longevity in the future. Keeping this in mind one wonders in how far the societal circumstances will affect the functions of grandparents. If it is a given fact that grandparents provide stability and play an enormous role in caretaking within and outside of the family, it gives rise to the question what the future family will look like if the same grandparents have to work all day. It would then not be an option for grandchildren to visit their grandparents after school or when they need advice or long for stability; for instance when their parents get divorced. Loss of stability and the absence of tales about the cultural or family heritage and the lack of conveying moral values may result in ill manners of future children due to the fact that grandmother's function of 'replacement parent' vanishes for the sake of working hours. Any further speculative assumptions will be inconclusive and therefore I suggest that this section should rather be seen as an outlook into the future and the role that grandparents might possibly play there.

2.5. Synopsis

Chapter 2 dealt with a vast range of topics and issues connected with the concept of age. Therefore it is perhaps helpful to wrap up everything that has been said so far in one short summarizing section. As can clearly be seen, longevity has many consequences. The perception of old people has changed

over time, since humans generally tend to honor things and also people that are rare. Since old people cannot be said to be rare anymore these days, they seem to be less respected than they have been respected for a long time before. This notion applies to the West as well as to the East, contrary to widespread assumptions and stereotypes. The respectful behavior towards old people is also dependent on urbanization. The more urbanized a society, the less respect and honor is found for their elderly.

Several improvements in the medical sector and also in other fields can be seen as the reasons for the increasing life expectancy of people in general. One of the results of longevity is the rising pension age, which again results in effects on family structures next to other modernization processes. This change can again lead to a disruption of family communication in the worst case, and can further lead to pedagogical changes or failure of value transmission within the family. All of this again gives rise to the question whether the impression of and attitude to old people is not rather a cleavage of opinions and attitudes than a clear-cut 'mono-argument'. On the one hand, old people are perceived as frail, useless and not worth to be honored anymore, due to the increasing number of senior citizens in general. On the other hand old people are respected in so far, as they are expected to work longer and are in this case viewed as contributors to the pension system. The latter aspect also has a financial implication of being able to earn money for the pension fund instead of paying for pension wages only. Fact is however, old people in a family, i.e. grandparents or great – grandparents are important contributors to family life as well as for family order and heritage identity. There is also evidence, for example from the internet, that young people obviously like to turn to elderly people for advice, which they do for instance on online forum platforms.

Concerning the discussion about the role of grandparents, I see one major difficulty: grandparents have mainly been seen as grandparents, rather than as elderly people. One generally perceives one's own grandparents in a much different way than other old people, which is supposedly perfectly normal, since there is, at least usually, a personal connection. However, we are in direct or

indirect contact with elderly people everyday and how we perceive **them** and what kind of understanding we show them is usually quite differently. Furthermore it is important to understand that it is not so significant for this paper how elderly people communicate themselves⁴; but rather how others communicate 'about' elderly persons or how they are (not) represented by others. In order to evaluate how elderly people mainly as non-family members are portrayed, we now move to the next section of this chapter, which deals with the art of representation.

3. Representation and the Construction of Identity

When we look at people, we usually do not think about what they represent or what they are trying to represent, unless somebody acts or looks especially peculiar to us. Most of the time, however, we judge other people in terms of how they look, how they act, and how old they are, even if this happens subconsciously. This judgment can happen in everyday situations, but also through representation in various media. In this case the representation is indirect through a channel. Roger Hiemstra et al. published an article in the journal of *Educational Gerontology* in 1983, with the title "How older persons are portrayed in television advertising: implications for educators". They cited (1983:111) what Wass, Fillmer & Ward (1981) had already stated more than 15 years prior namely that "[m]ost people agree that television is a powerful medium in promoting communication, providing information, and influencing attitudes". Almost two decades later, the extent to which television influences our lives will hardly have become less, but supposedly much more. Nowadays the internet, besides the traditional media is not to be forgotten in its existence

⁴ For a more detailed account cf. e.g. Nicholas Coupland, Justine Coupland and Howard Giles deal with in *Language Society & the Elderly* (Coupland, Coupland, Giles 1991).

and power to influence the audience, users or consumers. The authors further stated that already in 1983 (1983:112) "[s]everal authors and researcher have shown that the elderly generally are portrayed negatively in television commercials". Furthermore they also mention what Kubey stated in 1977 (1983:112), that although there has been a plethora of studies about the "impact of television on younger viewers, the effect of the medium on adult and elderly viewers has not received much study". This means that although mostly younger people are depicted on television, the effect of this type of presentation on older people seems to be hardly relevant in terms of research. Hiemstra et al. also raise another important issue for the underlying work. They say (1983:113) that "[s]ocietal attitudes toward the elderly have been studied in a variety of settings in addition to television". According to them

Smith (1976) completed a content analysis of the elderly as portrayed in prescription drug ads. The elderly were portrayed in a majority of the ads. Such negative portrayals were suggested as reinforcing existing stereotypes.

Other studies about the attitude toward old people that are mentioned in Hiemstra et. al's paper (1983: 113-114) have been carried out for twentieth century literature. Also in relation to recent books (Peterson and Karnes 1976), there has been a study (1983:113) about "the effects of adolescent literature on the attitude of teenagers" by Peterson and Eden in 1977). Another study deals with the analysis of joke books and how old people are portrayed in them (Davies 1977). Yet another study considers the representation of old people in texts and poems (Sohnngen &Smith 1978). All of the studies, mentioned in Hiemstra et al's. paper, reach the same or similar conclusions. As Hiemstra et. al. put it (1983:113), "[s]uch materials can be hypothesized to reinforce negative stereotypes that persist in the media".

If we distance ourselves from television and other media as such and move to a more specialized text type within media, namely advertisement, many things that have been stated above can be applied to advertisement just as much. Concerning the perception of old people in advertisement, the situation is

almost the same. One rather unusual attempt would be to see old people as a 'product', namely a 'textual product' in any kind of text. This means that through text old people are portrayed in certain ways, that creates a certain way of looking at them and therefore possibly also an attitude towards them. However, as explained above with the example of advertisement, also texts can differ in the 'textual products' they create. A 'textual product' can be produced on purpose but also accidentally, as for example through the use of certain lexical habits. One 'product' old people frequently seem to represent nowadays is that they stay healthier for longer and longer, are agile and work longer due to the raised pension age. The second 'product' they often stand for is quite contrary namely that they are frail, weak, sick, useless, ridiculous and the like. The coexistence of these quite contrary images logically results in a certain kind of confusion. The reason for this is simply that old people stand for too many, often contradicting things, which can only lead to difficulties in deciding what it is that is actually 'true' about them. This again leads to another problem. Those who want to represent old people, draw upon their impression from real life, which is apparently a very confused impression. If we then look at the representations of old people in advertisement or other texts, it is completely logical that these portrayals can only be unrealistic just as much.

In summary one can say that people represent something on the one hand, but can also be represented on the other hand (i.e. by other people through a medium). While you may have an influence on how you actively choose to represent something (or even yourself) or choose what you would like to represent, you do not always have an influence on how you are passively depicted by others. One field apart from ageing, where this has also been an issue throughout many years is homosexuality. In the media, especially in sitcoms, it has been debated at least since the 1970s and it still is an issue today. The same thing was true for women in the media two or three decades ago. For this paper, it is important to investigate how old people are represented nowadays, in order to find out what the societal attitude towards them might be. Therefore in the next section I will attempt to screen the issue of representation as far as it is relevant for the present work.

3.1. Stuart Hall and his work of Representation

In order to be able to understand the notion of representation it is also necessary to deal with the phenomenon of 'culture', which is done in this section. The main underlying piece of literature is *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* edited by Stuart Hall published in 1997. Hall describes rather intelligibly what culture is made up of and how it is linked to other areas of life, such as representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation. In the examples above we have briefly touched upon representation, production and consumption. However, these areas will be related to each other as well as to identity and regulation in the following section.

3.1.1. The 'circuit of culture'

A very illustrative way of explaining culture is shown in the beginning of Hall's work. Figure 1 shows Paul du Gay's (Hall 1997:1) 'circuit of culture'. It visualizes how 'representation', 'regulation', 'consumption', 'production' and 'identity' are not only a chain of events, but that all of the five affairs are interlinked and influence each other. It should be clear that none of the participating concepts of the circle can be seen as separate, but they are interlocked in certain ways. Therefore, I would like to discuss du Gay's 'circuit' in a more detailed manner.

I would like to open the discussion with the component of the circuit du Gay calls 'production'. A media product is 'produced' with a certain content that 'stands for' or 'represents' something from real life. The textual or media product can be any kind of text, no matter if it is a private conversation, a public discussion, a newspaper article or any kind of other text. The 'production' of a certain content is further linked to 'representation'. A specific content 'stands for' something. If this specific content is a sentence as for example

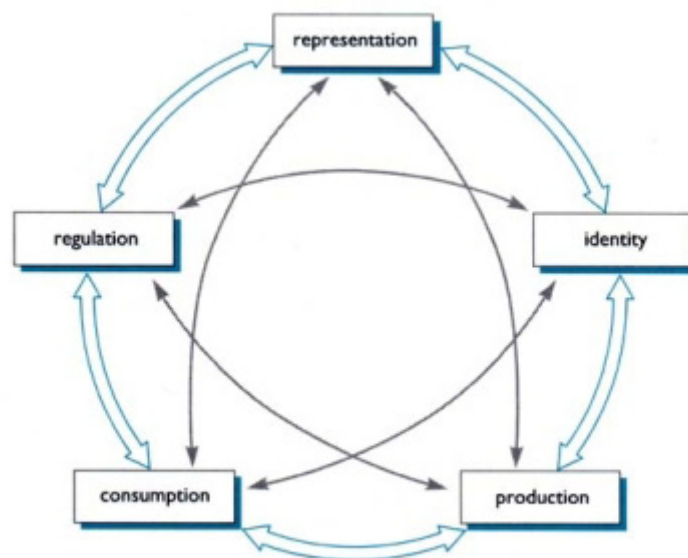
Ex. 11 'the diva still shares her wisdom after she has decided to retrieve from public life after 50 years of experience ',

the impression one gets of age will most probably differ tremendously from the impression one gets from a sentence like

Ex. 2 'the frail old manager still cannot stop intervening in business meetings, even though she has retired already'.

The first example creates the impression that the 'sharing of wisdom' is something that is desired by younger colleagues, while in the second example the 'intervening' creates an impression of annoying behavior and interference in matters that should no longer be of concern to her. The content however, is almost the same. It is only the choice of words that 'produces' a picture of an old woman in one or the other way.

Figure 1 The Circuit of Culture-Paul du Gay



from Paul Du Gay, *Production of Culture/Cultures of Production* (London: The Open University), 1997

'Representation', another component of du Gay's 'circuit of culture', is also affected by the type of text and hence connotative 'production'. In the example sentences, the first and the second sentence subjects 'stand for' or represent completely different women. While the first creates a picture of a Hollywood diva that is deeply honored, the second example rather represents a grumpy, old,

stubborn lady. Furthermore, how the two old women are represented may affect their 'identity' as well as the identity of other old people. If it is a fact that an old person is 'represented' as a celebrity, the person will also adapt his or her identity according to this 'produced' fact. If a person is 'produced' and 'represented' as weak and annoying, the person may identify with these qualities. The effect on identity can, however, also apply to any other person that may or may not identify with the women from the example in various ways, such as thinking to be like one of the quoted women. Contrarily the effect might be a refusal to be like them, represented through thoughts like 'others are like that but I am different'. This would then be similar to the so called 'third-person effect' from media studies, which is according to Brosius and Engel.(1996), "the tendency of people to expect the media to be more effective on third persons than on themselves".

'Regulation' is another component of du Gay's 'circuit of culture'. A text is usually 'regulated' depending on the nation of origin, the circumstance under which a text is produced, and the type of medium it appears in, and certain cultural values. This can happen in terms of offensiveness, objectiveness, choice of words, in-group language or membership terms and the like. A magazine created for pensioners will certainly differ in the choice of words from a youth magazine even if dealing with the same topic. The types of regulation are manifold and reach from national law for television and radio formats, over financial sponsors for newspapers and magazines, to private, indirect rules in personal conversations or letters among many others. These 'regulations' certainly also affect the 'consumption' of the specific contents: airing times, broadcasting laws, limitation of pages in a print medium, limitations concerning intended audience and therefore a certain choice of language and issues, the address and name of the intended recipient of a letter, culturally shared values and the disruption thereof, and many other things that 'regulate' textual production have to be considered as influencing factors for the consumption of a textual product.

From everything that has been said so far, it should be obvious that all of the components of the 'circuit' of culture are linked, and that they influence and depend each other. As soon as one component changes, all the other aspects will change accordingly. This 'circuit of culture' is relevant for the underlying work since the use of language in different text types will be analyzed later in this study. This analysis will pick up on 'production' in terms of lexical choice, 'regulation' in terms of text type specific usage, 'representation' in terms of how the specific lexical choice in specific text types influences readers, 'consumption' in terms of its connection with the societal attitude toward ageing. 'Identity' comes into play when the final question is whether all of the previous outcomes really affect old people's self. The aim is to find out how old people are viewed by society, and in how far it is relevant that a specific textual content deals with old people, and further the text's function as channel for representing age. Concisely speaking I will attempt to investigate how old people are represented through language and what effects can be seen from that representation. Before that, it is necessary to take a look at the connection between language and representation.

3.1.2. Language as a Representational Systems and the Notion of Culture

In the course of this work and especially in the last section, the word 'culture' has been used quite frequently. This section attempts to link 'culture', which is important in order to understand certain concepts of being old, to 'representation'. Stuart Hall raised the question "what does representation have to do with 'culture': what is the connection between them?" (1997:1) and answered his own question as follows:

To put it simply, culture is about 'shared meanings'. Now language is the privileged in which we 'make sense' of things, in which meaning is produced and exchanged. Meanings can only be shared through our common access to language. So language is central to meaning and culture and has always been regarded as the key repository of cultural values and meanings.

Hall then explains (1997:1) how language enables people to build up these shared values through communication and states that "language is able to do this because it operates as a 'representational system'", which uses

signs and symbols –whether they are sounds, written words, electronically produced images, musical notes, even objects-to stand for or represent to other people our concepts, ideas and feelings.

Having Hall's theory in mind, one can easily see that in the case of elderly people, the meaning of *old* or *elderly* persons within a society is influenced by the way they are represented, which is done in various ways. My major focus will, however, be on spoken and written language, more precisely the choice of words, i.e. lexis rather than syntactic patterns. My minor focus will be on images that are used together with certain linguistic choices, however, only to the extent that is relevant to analyze the print advertisements in the respective section. As a next step, I would like to point out one more statement of Hall, which is highly important for the approach to text that was chosen for this study, which is that "[l]anguage is one of the 'media' through which thoughts, ideas and feelings are represented in a culture". A word like *elderly* is hence the manifestation of the mental concept that exists in the minds of a society's members for their elderly people. Hence, one of the questions that have been posed in the beginning of this paper can now be answered. The question was whether it is legitimate to assume that textual representations of old people influence a society in terms of their opinion about old people. Considering everything that has been said so far, one comes to the assumption that the answer to the question is yes; since according to Hall, language functions first of all as a medium to represent thoughts ideas and concepts, and is second of all seen as the key repository of cultural values. Stuart Hall (1997:4) further argues that

[m]embers of the same culture [...] must share broadly speaking the same 'cultural codes'. In this sense thinking and feeling are themselves 'systems of representation', in which our concepts, images and emotions 'stand for' or represent, in our mental life, things which are or may be 'out there' in the world

Considering what has been said already about 'language as a representational system' it becomes third of all evident that thoughts and feelings are expressed through language, and language also influences thoughts and feelings. Hence one can conclude that old people are represented through text and also other forms, in specific ways within a society or culture. Concisely, we represent the concepts, ideas and feelings about old people through articulating language to others, as well as through other features of communication, as for example facial expressions and gesture. Hall (1997:4) even goes a step further as he argues that "languages work through 'representation'. They are 'systems of representation' ", and he adds that "all ways of producing and communicating [...] work like languages". This becomes evident when looking at the media. It is well known from media studies that media content influences reality to a certain extent⁵. A general assumption is that the media mirrors societal behavior, but also things which are shown in the media are adopted by people and adapted to their behavior, opinions, appearance among other things. Converted to the situation of old people, it can then be said that ideas and concepts about old people constantly spiral and consequently get stronger. Media pick up a society's attitude, mirror it, the societal behavior is again influenced, i.e. those who might have had a good opinion about old people might see that many others do not and adapt their own opinion and then the media mirror the general attitude again, and so forth. Certainly this spiral theoretically works in both directions, positive and negative, depending on the point of departure. If the concepts, ideas, and feelings about old people in a society are evenly distributed in terms of positive and negative opinions about them, the representations of them would then also have to be evenly distributed. This would further mean that after the media have mirrored a society's' behavior and the society again adapts their behavior, the result will accordingly be a relatively neutral opinion about old people. Still, in order to be able to influence the opinion of a whole society, it relies on shared meanings and values and also on the way of reporting.

⁵ Cf. for example introductory works to media studies

3.1.2.1. The six properties of human language

In order to be able to communicate, represent and understand things we need to be able to use language, the most important 'representational system'. In order to achieve the goal of 'communicating' it is necessary to speak and understand a language on roughly the same level as all other members of a society. This is necessary in order to express the feelings and thoughts one has about a certain topic. Apart from language it is also essential that the concept communicated about is also shared and understood by all other members of a certain culture. A European and a Japanese person will probably have trouble talking about a bed that is too hard to sleep in, since the concept of 'bed' is a completely different one. However, it should be clear that one should not see language as a medium to utter only things you want to express, but also as something with which one often expresses certain opinions, feelings and mental concepts subconsciously. This is partly done through the so called 'properties of human language', which do possess a certain kind of representational function. The six main 'properties of human language' are 'cultural transmission', 'duality', 'discreteness', 'productivity', 'displacement' and 'arbitrariness'⁶. (Yule 1996:20-25). It is quite obvious that the latter five properties listed are all used for the purpose of representation in the sense of expressing different mental concepts and distinguishing one from another. The sixth 'property of human language' namely 'cultural transmission' makes it strikingly obvious how closely linked language and culture, including its moral opinions and values, feelings and concepts are. A child of biological Thai parents for example that has been

⁶ In detail this means that through the property 'duality' we can produce meaning by combining distinct sounds, which then have depending on their combination distinct meanings. 'Discreteness' further enables us to use and understand that sounds are distinct in meaning, i.e. that neither *sack* and *back*, nor *sack* and *pack*, nor *back* and *pack* mean the same, or refer to the same thing. 'Productivity' means that we can always create new words with new meanings for new situations if the already existing dimension of language, that is already used and accustomed, comes to its limits. The property of 'displacement' allows us to talk about things not present in space and time, and 'arbitrariness' means that there is no iconic relation between a word and the entity it describes, e.g. the word *dog* has no similarities in shape with the animal dog, apart from the fact that not every real dog looks the same. Hence, we can see that all of these properties enable us to utter what is in our minds. Cf. Yule 1996:20-35.

raised by American adoptive parents will certainly speak English and therefore also share the common 'cultural codes' of the American culture rather than that of his or her biological parents. This means that language and cultural values are not genetically inherent but culturally learned, and they further influence our understanding of the world and hence, how we choose to represent certain ideas, concepts and things through language. Thus, one can also argue that the concept of age and accordingly the language used to refer to old age and old people is culture specific. This logically leads to different culture specific usages of language referring to old people and old age, and possibly also to differences in meaning of the exact same word in different cultures. This could roughly be identified as something similar to the 'Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis' (Yule 1996:247), which claims that people using different languages to see the world differently⁷. Certainly, one has to keep in mind that it always depends on the individual speakers of a language how they use language within a specific culture. Terms like social dialect and idiolect prove that there is such a thing as individual choice or group language use. However, this will be discussed in more detail later when we turn to identity and identity construction. Before that the theories of representation are introduced, and it will become clear how they are linked to language.

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The 'Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis' states that for example Eskimos see snow in much more variation than the ordinary European; Indian tribes see stones as animate, because they distinguish between animate and inanimate in their language. According to Yule, Sampson has argued against this hypothesis, stating that in a language where there are male and female articles and endings for words, he does not believe that the language users of these languages see those words as either feminine or masculine in the same way as they see men and women as masculine or feminine (Yule 1996:247-248).

3.1.3. Representation, Meaning, Signs and Language

This section briefly touches upon some theories and findings that are related to language and its production of meaning. First of all, one of the main theories of representation is selected for the textual analysis carried out later in this study. Since the constructionist approach to representation deals with concepts and signs, it is necessary to explain what a sign is apart from the common and widespread meaning, which is why the section also briefly deals with Ferdinand de Saussure and his study of signs.

3.1.3.1 How language produces meaning - the Three 'Theories of Representation'

The three theories we are looking at all attempt to explain "how representation of meaning [works] through language" (Hall 1997:24). The first of them is called the 'reflective' or 'mimetic' approach⁸, followed by the 'intentional approach'⁹ and finally there is the 'constructionist' approach, which is the one among the three that is important for this work, and which will therefore be explained in

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The 'mimetic approach' basically argues that a sign, a symbol, or in the same way a word, which is nothing else but a sign that stands for or represents something, is not the real thing itself, but only 'mimes' what it stands for. More easily explained, the word *bed* or a two dimensional drawing that resembles a bed, is not the bed itself, but only represents an actual bed. According to Hall (1997:25) this is only possible "because [we] know the code which links the concept with a particular word or image". In a conversation between a Western European and a Japanese person difficulties may well arise. The Japanese person simply might not know what a bed is, what its function is and what it looks like. Therefore he or she does not only lack a word for bed in his or her own language, but cannot understand the word *bed* in another language, because the word cannot be linked to a concept a person lacks as a whole.

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The theory of the 'intentional' approach basically argues that meaning is produced by the speaker, or author him or herself. Certainly it is true that we use language in a way that is meaningful to ourselves when communicating. However, let me give an - admittedly exaggerated - example: If we utter a sentence like 'the ship is sinking' really means 'can I have some milk?' we will have a communication problem very soon, if nobody else knows the 'true' meaning of 'the ship is sinking'. As Hall puts it (1997:25): "[o]ur private thoughts have to negotiate with all the other meanings for words or images which have been stored in language which our use of the language system will inevitably trigger into action".

more detail. As opposed to the 'mimetic' and the 'intentional' approach, the 'constructionist approach' implies that meaning cannot be fixed; neither by things nor by language users. The theory is rather that we 'construct' the meaning of things by using 'representational systems', i.e. concepts and signs. Hall (1997:25) states that

we must not confuse the 'material' world, where things and people exist, and the 'symbolic' practices and processes through which representation, meaning and language operate

He further clarifies that constructionists do not believe that there is no material world, but that they simply believe that things themselves are meaningless until we assign a certain meaning to them, within our culture where we share certain codes with other members of this culture. He further states (1997:26) that as far as language is concerned,

a particular sound or word 'stands for', 'symbolizes' or 'represents' a concept that it can function in a language, as a sign and convey meaning-or, as the constructionists say, signify (sign-i-fy).

In order to be able to pick up on the constructionist approach, we need to clarify, what a 'sign', a 'signifier' and 'the signified' are, and hence it is necessary to turn to Ferdinand de Saussure.

3.1.3.2. Sign, Signifier, Signified

The Belgian linguist Ferdinand de Saussure has once assumed (Culler 1976:19) that "Language is a system of signs". According to Culler (1976) and Hall (1997:31), Saussure divided a 'sign' into two subdivisions, namely the so called 'signifier', which is the 'form' e.g. a word like *elderly*, an image etc. and the 'signified', which is the 'concept' or 'idea', i.e. what we have in our minds. It is our individual, but nevertheless culturally learned imagination what 'old

people' are, which is supposed to be represented. As Hall puts it: "Every time you hear or read or see the 'signifier' [...] it correlates with the 'signified'. This could mean that every time you read the word *elderly* the mental image of for example a humpbacked man with a hat and cane appears before your inner eye, if that is your concept old age. Culler (1976:19) summarizes that

the 'sign' is the union of a form which 'signifies' [...] and an idea 'signified'. Though we may speak [...] as if they are separate entities, they exist only as components of the sign [;] the central fact of language

According to Hall (1997:31), in Saussure's opinion the meaning of a 'sign' can only be interpreted when put into relation with another 'sign'. Hall gives the example of family relations. It is difficult to explain what the word *father* means if you cannot put it in relation with *daughter* or *son*. This also means that it is hard to define 'old' or 'elderly' if you do not define 'young' at the same time, which has already been shown in the beginning of this work, where it became evident that even in dictionaries *old* can only be defined in relation to *young*.

The last important step that needs to be carried out after having discussed the subdivisions of 'signs' is now to discuss how 'signs' are interpreted. The interpretation of signs is an essential part when we want to arrive at a certain meaning, which will become relevant in this work after the results of the analysis have been presented. Hall (1997:32-33) mentions that certain words or expressions, he chose the word *black* as an example, inevitably have certain negative connotations. Relevant for the underlying piece of work is to find out what 'signifiers' there are for people of a certain age. In the corpus analysis such signifiers are analyzed. The hypothesis is that like *black* also the word *elderly* has a rather negative connotation. In Hall's opinion the sender and the receiver of a message are both responsible for the production of meaning. Since meanings change diachronically, this further means that the connotation of *elderly* can only change when also the mental concepts of the sender as well as those of the receiver change; which again can only happen if the representation of the elderly changes within their culture. Hall (1997:33) says

that "there is a constant 'sliding' of meaning in all interpretation" and adds that "[s]igns which have not been intelligibly received and interpreted are not, in any useful sense, 'meaningful'". The question is whether and how the meaning of *elderly*, among others, that was once claimed to be a euphemistic term, has changed diachronically and possibly also synchronically. The different possibilities the English language provides to refer to old people and the meanings of these terms will be investigated and juxtaposed in the analyses.

3.2. Construction of Identity

We talk of corporate identity, consumer identity, brand identity, identity finding, national identity; we say that someone has an identity crisis or a split identity etc. However, if one is asked to define the word identity, one will usually hesitate before being able to answer in one sentence. Spontaneously one would come up with definitions like 'identity' is 'what you are' or 'who you are'. Still, this then poses the problem of which of the two is more important or whether they are both equally important or whether identity is something different after all. One may wonder how and identity is received or acquired, whether people possess one from the moment of birth and whether it changes over time. Furthermore, questions as for example whether all people have and identity or whether some people lack identity may arise. The most important question, however, may be how an identity is constructed. In this section I will try to find answers to these questions and beyond that try to find out and explain if such a thing as 'age identity' exists in the available literature or whether age is neglected in the academic field that deals with identity. Furthermore, I will try to explore the meaning of the terms identity and personality and what the differences between them are, if any.

3.2.1. Definitions and Introduction

According to a selection of dictionaries 'identity' is described as follows: The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1992 [1987]:517) states it is

"who or what a particular person or thing is", "loss of identity/an identity crisis" however, is quite confusingly described as a "lack [...] [of] self-confidence and [...] [having] no particular purpose in life". The second definition for 'identity' in this dictionary is "sameness, exact likeness". According to these definitions, you 'are something', supposedly who you are; if you have lost the same identity, it rather has to do with lack of self confidence than simply 'not being who you are'; i.e. not being yourself. According to these definitions, having an identity and losing it can by no means refer to the same concept. The German dictionary for foreign words *Duden-Das Fremdwörterbuch* (2005:435) describes identity in a more detailed manner. Additionally to the definitions above also as "existieren von j[e]m[an]d[e]m, etwas als ein Bestimmtes, Individuelles, Unverwechselbares" (the existence of someone, something specific, individual, indistinguishable), and further states that the psychological definition is "die als Selbst erlebte innere Einheit der Person" [a unity that is experienced as self by a person]. A term that is frequently confused or mingled with 'identity' is 'personality'. 'Personality is by definition "the whole nature of character of a particular person" (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1992 [1987]:767). In my understanding 'personality' is concisely speaking how a person appears to be, or likes to appear to others, while 'identity' is who a person really is, or how this person sees him or herself. The difference between personality and identity could then, very simply speaking, be seen as third person perception versus self perception.

In *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious*, according to John E. Joseph (2004:1)

[t]here are [...] two basic aspects to a person's identity: their name, which serves first of all to single them out from other people, and then that deeper, intangible something that constitutes who one really is, and for which we do not have a precise word.¹⁰

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However, as identity is apparently something that is hard to define, also personality seems to be quite an abstract thing. David Chiriboga, who wrote an article about "Personality in Later Life", states that personality is "what has been called the 'essence' of the human being". (Chiriboga in: Silverman.1987:133). He further states that

[a]lthough the nature of personality has been the subject of debate since the times of Plato and Aristotle, there is no agreement concerning what the term means".

Chiriboga (in Silverman.1987:133) argues, "there is some agreement that personality can be broadly defined as the objective component of the individual's self concept". Considering the previous definitions for 'identity', this would mean that personality is not a separate thing, but that it should rather be assumed that personality is actually a part of identity. If this were a given fact, the only logical conclusion is that identity changes whenever personality changes. Assuming that there are also other components of identity, the reverse is not necessarily the case. In order to be able to investigate what 'identity' consists of besides personality, it is necessary to find out how it is constructed, what its features are and further, what the purpose of having a thing called identity is.

3.2.2. Construction and the purposes of identity

When we talk about identity one wonders whether it is a thing everybody possesses from birth, or whether one needs to develop it. Considering what Joseph has said, it seems to be both. A name for example is given to people,

Note that a person's name is often to be said indicative of his or her character, and further one can quite often guess how old the carrier of a name approximately is. *Jennifer* will most probably be much younger than *Henrietta*, at least in the current decade in Europe.

usually by their parents. As far as the last name is concerned, there is less influence nowadays, since people are born (or adopted) into a family that already carries a certain last name. Considering how last names came into being however, they have been informative of someone's identity, at least in terms of profession, rank or area of living. To a certain extent this is still true today. A last name ending with '-sky' for example is indicative of Czech or Polish origin etc.

Apart from personality, the remaining part of identity, this thing that 'constitutes the self', may be partly inherent, but I believe that it is also partly acquired through external circumstances such as one's nationality and culture, upbringing, ethnicity, religion, and personal experience in life. All of these factors influence identity, and as a natural consequence, this becomes manifest in a person's language. The link between language and identity can be clearly seen in various linguistic descriptions. George Yule (1996:244) for example states that "aspects of [...] social and regional dialect variations are combined [...] in the speech of each individual". He further explains:

The term 'idiolect' is used for the personal dialect of each individual speaker of a language. There are other factors, such as voice quality and physical state [!], which contribute to the identifying features in an individual's speech,

Taking up what Yule argues, this would mean that the identity of people changes throughout life, since the voice quality and physical state of people usually changes from childhood to old age. This is then quite contrary to what Joseph says, since he argues that identity is "that thing that constitutes who one really is". However also Ursula M Staudinger considers identity to change constantly, (2005 in:Johnson:237-244) as she argues in her article "Personality and Ageing". She states (2005:237) that personality, is not to be seen as a constant thing after the age of 30 anymore, but that it continuously changes and adapts to new circumstances. She says that "[m]ore and more empirical evidence [...] has demonstrated that 'both' stability 'and' change characterize personality". According to her, the peak of 'personality consistency' is at the age

of 50. She also argues that "[w]ith increasing age [...] people define themselves more and more in terms of health and physical functioning, life experiences and hobbies". However, it is possible that this kind of self perception is the result of imposing certain features on old people, through e.g. media representation or societal attitude. I therefore agree with Labouvie-Vief and her colleagues (1995), who according to Staudinger (2005:239),

have shown that self-definitions move from little differentiation between self and other, and heavy influence from social conventions early in life, towards definitions that emphasize contextual, process-related, and idiosyncratic features of selfhood later.

Again it is evident from what they argue that the social surrounding plays an enormous role in opinion making, even for the opinion about one's self. Also George Yule briefly picks up on the topic of age when he states that

many social factors [...] determine each person's idiolect. From the perspective of the social study of language, you are, in many respects, what you say.

Other examples that link language and identity are, code switching, which can be used to switch between private and work identity. Jargon and register hint at group affiliation or exclusion which is again informative of identity. If someone uses extremely sophisticated language it might show that this person is well educated. Especially interesting in this context is the phenomenon that some people use what they at least believe to be proper language, in order to show or pretend having a certain status, i.e. overt prestige. There are also specific features of language varieties, such as h-dropping and absence of the copula for African American Vernacular English, that identify (!) a speaker of belonging to a certain speech community. There are distinctive features for 'Gay Speak', the language of men and women, there are variations in the language of rich and poor people, geographic differences marked by isoglosses and many more factors about language and its speakers. All of these are or can be indicative of the identity of the individual language user. In fact, the whole process of

learning and using language is linked to a person's identity, and this identity is reflected through the same person's use of language.

In summary, the purposes of identity are defining the background of a person, making obvious where a person belongs, as well as and to indicate a person's age, sex, origin and ethnicity. However, besides the purposes listed above there are also other purposes, which Joseph (2004:3) describes as "three apparent pairs of subtypes of personal identity". The first is "one for real people and one for fictional characters", which in this paper will be relevant for the qualitative analysis of texts, especially for the advertisement analysis, which shows 'fictional' people. The second pair is "one for oneself and one for others", which is for this paper relevant in terms of how old people see themselves and how others see them. The third and last pair of subtypes is "one for individuals and one for groups", which is of minor importance for this work, it could be relevant in terms of identity changes of a grandchild when together with the grandparents as opposed to a group of non-family old people.

3.2.3. Possible existence and manifestation of age identity

Literature that deals with identity usually uses three factors in order to distinguish people from each other. John Gumperz and Jenny Cook-Gumperz (1982:1) state that "[w]e customarily take gender, ethnicity and class as given parameters and boundaries within which we create our social identities". The parameter age, is usually not a parameter that stands by itself, but is, if at all, a sub parameter of any other parameter. Nationality and religion are further factors that are accepted as distinguishers for social identity. However, George Yule (1996:241) dedicated at least a couple of lines to old people and their language as he states: "[e]ven within groups of the same social class, however, other differences can be found which seem to correlate with factors such as the age or gender of speakers". Still he further refers mainly to the differences in lexis when investigating the time span between grandparent-grandchild. The

purpose of this work, however, is not so much the language of old people, but the language that is used by others to refer to them. It is extremely important to realize, as Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz argue, that these parameters, as for example gender, ethnicity and class are not constant, but that it is relevant to look at "the communicative processes, by which they [i.e. the parameters] arise". This would also apply if age was a parameter. Furthermore, they argue (1982:1) that

communication cannot be studied in isolation; it must be analyzed in terms of its effect on people's lives. We must focus on what communication does: how it constrains evaluation and decision making".

'What language does' will also be the focus of the subsequent chapters of this work. It will be investigated how communication about old people influences society in their opinion making and evaluation of old people, ageing and old age. Furthermore, connotations of certain words and terms used to refer to old people are discussed, and possible semantic prosodies will be suggested.

3.3. Summary

In Chapter 3 we have learned that all five components of the so called 'circuit of culture', among which representation and identity have received special attention, are inter-related as well as inter-dependent. Language has been defined as a 'representational system' which can be seen as a manifestation of mental concepts of a certain culture. Additionally, the three theories of representation have been introduced, among which the constructionist approach was suggested as the most important for this work. The choice was made due to the fact that this paper deals with the investigation of meaning construction processes for a 'signifier' (e.g. the word *elderly*), and further the connection to its 'signified' (i.e. old people), for which the constructionist approach is especially suitable, with its axiom that meaning is assigned instead of pre-given. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated how representation is

related to self-perception. In the course of investigating identity as an obscure thing also personality has been discussed. The boundary between the two terms and concepts is rather blurry. In this chapter it has been assumed, however, that personality is not separate from identity, but rather a part of it. Identity can be said to be essential for a person's ability to express their personal beliefs and opinions through language. Hence, language use functions literally as the mouthpiece for one's ideas and beliefs which are, to a certain extent, socially and culturally influenced. Moreover we have seen that identity is often divided into different parameters, among which age does play a role, although it is not one of the main factors. Finally, it became apparent that identity is largely not stable but continually changes throughout life, and that this evolution itself is culturally influenced.

4. Corpus Analysis

According to the glossary in H.G. Widdowson's *Discourse Analysis* (2007:128), a corpus is "[a] collection, often on a very large scale, of actually occurring textual data, electronically stored and analyzable by computer program". For the purpose of this paper, the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* has been chosen for the analysis of such texts, in order to find out how *elderly*, *senior citizen* and other synonymous words are used in various text types.

4.1. The Corpus of Contemporary American English

The *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) has been chosen for several reasons. First of all it is easily accessible via the internet, and secondly it is free of any charges. Furthermore, it is a corpus of a quite reasonable size. Moreover, as can be inferred from the name, it is a contemporary corpus; which implies that it is not closed, but rather adapted once or twice every year. This is a quite relevant feature, since in this study the focus is on contemporary language use. Comparisons to non-contemporary language use or other

language varieties will only be made in order to show how usage may have changed or differed over time. This is possible due to the fact that other related corpora can be accessed easily for any additional purposes. An additional factor for choosing COCA was that the structure of the corpus is quite clear, which makes working with and within the corpus a pleasant and rather uncomplicated undertaking.

4.1.1. Size, Description and Content of the COCA

The *Corpus of Contemporary American English* currently contains more than 400 million words. From 1990 to 2009, 20 million words have been added per year. It is updated every six to nine months; the last update has been in summer 2009. The sections are spoken English, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. The number of texts is evenly divided among the sections, and each section is further divided into sub-genres.

The COCA can be used to search for exact words and phrases, wildcards (e.g. un*ly), lemmas (e.g. all forms of a word *old*, *older*, *oldest*) and additionally any combination of the above. As an important feature for this work it also offers a search function for collocates which provides results within a range of ten words before and after the query, and makes a distinction between word classes possible. Search limits can be made in terms of relevance and frequency, and additionally a comparison of frequency can be made. Comparisons are possible by genre as well as sub-genre (e.g. magazine-sports magazine), or over time, (i.e. diachronically). Further, it is possible to compare collocates of synonymous words, as for example *old/elderly*, and finding the frequency in the occurrence of synonyms for almost 60.000 words. Another option are complex searches such as "un-X-ed adjectives", "verb+any word+a form of *old*".

4.1.2. Search methods

When searching the corpus I first of all defined some synonyms or near-synonyms of *elderly* and *old*, in terms of my own estimation, in order to decide on queries for the rest of the analysis. As a next step I defined my terms of interest for the study and searched their synonyms in the COCA. The next step was to investigate the frequency in the occurrences concerning my terms of interest, which I decided to be the following: *elderly* as a noun as well *elderly* as an adjective, *old* as a noun and an adjective, *senior citizen* in singular and plural form, *pensioner*, *retired* as noun and adjective, *retiree* and *retirees*, as well as the words *elders* and *elder*. Comparisons are carried out including all text types, whereas the focus is on the thirty most frequent occurrences. Mentions can certainly be made about any of the one-hundred most frequent occurrences, which have been gathered from the corpus and which are listed in the appendix. Finally the most frequent surrounding words will be divided into three separate fields of investigation, namely according to word-class; (i.e nouns, verbs and adjectives). The co-textual nouns and adjectives will then be grouped in terms of positive, negative or neutral and also medical, in order to be able to find out which of the synonyms or near synonyms of *old* are more positively or negatively connoted, and how they then function in certain semantically prosodic ways.

4.2. Results

In this section the results of the actual analysis are presented. At first we will look at the search for synonyms, followed by the general frequency of the queries that have been used and how they are distributed among sections and time, which is then followed by the more detailed analysis of collocates, their surrounding text, (i.e. the co-text). At first the analysis is carried out for the 5 words before and after all chosen queries, and in the end there are also the results for the immediately preceding word for *elderly* and *senior citizen(s)* listed.

4.2.1. Synonyms

The first step of the investigation was to find out how synonymous the words used in the following analysis are to each other and what possible other synonyms are found for them. This is important in order to demonstrate that apparently identical words or assumed identical words as for example *old* and *elderly* can indeed be very different as far as semantic loading is concerned. In Table 1 the synonyms that have been found in the COCA are depicted.

Table 1: Synonym Search in the COCA

elderly as noun	occurrences	elderly as adjective	occurrences
0	0	old	177036
		senior	35837
		elderly	10677
		aging	8863
		mature	6163
		aged	4900
0			243476
elder as adjective	occurrences	elder as noun	occurrences
head	146948	0	0
chief	49389		
leader	36533		
elder	4116		
	236986		0
old as adjective	occurrences	old as noun	occurrences
other	528927	0	0
old	176437		
older	42788		
previous	29141		
ancient	19019		
elderly	10659		
old-fashioned	4910		
mature	4511		
aged	1944		
long-standing	1893		
one-time	1880		
outdated	1332		
dated	1223		
archaic	880		
antiquated	699		
outmoded	476		
erstwhile	426		
deep-rooted	215		
hoary	167		
out-of-date	156		

last	73		
timeworn	70		
childhood	2		
	827828		0
aged as adj.	occurrences	aged as noun	occurrences
old	176437	0	0
ancient	19019		
elderly	10659		
aged	1944		
venerable	1390		
hoary	167		
ripened	32		
matured	22		
	209670		0
pensioner	occurrences	retiree	occurrences
senior	790	senior	790
retiree	660	retiree	660
pensioner	78	pensioner	78
	1528		1528
retired as adj.	occurrences	retired as noun	occurrences
old	176437	0	0
elderly	10659		
retired	7584		
aged	1944		
emeritus	1332		
discharged	56		
superannuated	27		
	198039	0	0
senior as noun	occurrences	senior as adj.	occurrences
head	134373	major	84611
director	67386	higher	58271
leader	36520	older	42788
manager	30739	senior	35045
chief	23937	chief	25451
boss	11884	primary	25149
elder	2348	leading	15143
superior	921	superior	8307
senior	790	oldest	8201
first-born	83	above	3844
pensioner	78	elder	1767
		eldest	1512
		high-ranking	966
		over	519
		high-grade	261
		first-born	105
	309059		311940

Assuming that many people believe that the words *elderly*, *old*, *elders*, *pensioner*, *retiree*, *retired* and *senior* denote more or less the same, namely people of a certain age, it becomes evident from the synonyms of each of them

that there are tremendous differences in usage and also the semantics of each word.

4.2.2. Frequencies and Sectional Distribution

The next step in the investigation was to look at the occurrences of the chosen words. When collecting the corpus data I paid attention to various aspects. First of all I looked at the overall frequency of the query words. Secondly, I looked at their distribution among the different sections, in absolute numbers as well as the number per million speakers, and thirdly I collected data in periods of five years, again in absolute numbers and per million speakers. The "per million" number is calculated by dividing the number of occurrences by 400, since the corpus consists of approximately 400 million words.

Table 2: Overall Frequency and occurrences per million

	elderly as adj.	elderly as noun	senior citizen
total frequency	15	10978	408
per million	0,04	27,45	1,02
	aged as adj.	aged as noun	senior citizens
total frequency	2005	2	1802
per million	5,01	0,01	4,51
	retired as noun	retired as adj.	retiree as noun
total frequency	12	7871	703
per million	0,03	19,67	1,76
	elders as noun	elder as adj.	elder as noun
total frequency	4494	1820	2405
per million	11,24	4,55	6,01
	pensioner		
total frequency	81		
per million	0,20		

As can be seen in Table 2, *elderly* is used much more as a noun than it is used as an adjective, while *aged* is used much more as an adjective than a noun. Interestingly, *retiree* and *pensioner*, although they are, as mentioned above as completely synonymous, differ tremendously in frequency within the COCA. Remarkable is also the difference in use of *senior citizen* versus *senior citizens*. The plural form occurs much more often. In the case of *retired* the noun does not occur very frequently, while the adjective is used quite frequently. The word *elders* is used most often of the words listed in Table 2¹¹, followed by *elder* as a noun and as an adjective. Having stated the overall frequencies it is now necessary to look at the distribution of the lexical items among the sections 'spoken', which contains between 81.7 and 83 million words (unclear definition in the corpus), 'fiction' (78.8 million words), 'magazine' (83.3 million words), 'newspaper' (79.4 million words) and 'academic' (79.3 million words)¹². Table 3 shows the distribution among the sections, and when taking a closer look one can discover that some of the words clearly appear in one section more often than in the others. *Elderly* as an adjective is distributed quite evenly, however, most of all in the 'academic' section. The same thing is true for the nominal form of the same lexical item. It appears nowhere but once in 'magazine' but 14 times in the 'academic' section. Both, singular and plural forms of *senior citizen*

¹¹ In the BNC *elders* occurs 487 times, which is less often than *pensioner*.

¹² The COCA (<http://www.american corpus.org/>, 14 September, 2009) states the sections contain the following:

Spoken: Transcripts of unscripted conversation from more than 150 different TV and radio programs (examples: *All Things Considered* (NPR), *Newshour* (PBS), *Good Morning America* (ABC), *Today Show* (NBC), *60 Minutes* (CBS), *Hannity and Colmes* (Fox), *Jerry Springer*, etc). [See notes on the naturalness and authenticity of the language from these transcripts].

Fiction: Short stories and plays from literary magazines, children's magazines, popular magazines, first chapters of first edition books 1990-present, and movie scripts.

Popular Magazines: Nearly 100 different magazines, with a good mix (overall, and by year) between specific domains (news, health, home and gardening, women, financial, religion, sports, etc). A few examples are *Time*, *Men's Health*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Fortune*, *Christian Century*, *Sports Illustrated*, etc.

Newspapers: Ten newspapers from across the US, including: *USA Today*, *New York Times*, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, etc. In most cases, there is a good mix between different sections of the newspaper, such as local news, opinion, sports, financial, etc.

Academic Journals: Nearly 100 different peer-reviewed journals. These were selected to cover the entire range of the Library of Congress classification system (e.g. a certain percentage from B (philosophy, psychology, religion), D (world history), K (education), T (technology), etc.), both overall and by number of words per year.

are used in all sections, although rarely in 'fiction' and mostly in newspapers, followed by the 'spoken' section. While *aged* as a noun only appears twice in academic language, it is more frequent as an adjective and relatively evenly distributed among all sections. Least of all it is found in spoken language while it is most frequent in academic language. As far as the use of *retired* is concerned, it becomes evident from the data that, despite the obvious difference in total occurrences, the distribution among the sections is similar. Remarkable differences are that the noun *retired*, with a total of 12 occurrences appears twice in the 'newspaper' section, which is the third most frequent; the adjective is to be found most often in the same section (i.e. newspaper). Further, the noun's most frequent occurrences are in the 'spoken' section, while the adjective only appears as third most frequent in the spoken section.

Table 3: Frequency in absolute numbers and per million of the COCA sections

	spoken	pm	fiction	pm	magazine	pm	newspaper	pm	academic	pm
elderly as adj	1428	17,5	1516	19,3	2575	30,9	2235	28,2	3158	39,8
elderly as noun	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	14	0,2
senior citizen	86	1,1	42	0,5	75	0,9	159	2	42	0,5
senior citizens	416	5,1	60	0,8	282	3,4	911	11,5	122	1,5
aged as adj	117	1,4	488	6,2	497	6,0	315	4,0	581	7,3
aged as noun	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	2	0,0
retired as adj.	1241	15,2	522	6,6	1695	20,4	3554	44,8	766	9,7
retired as noun	5	0,1	1	0,0	0	0,0	2	0,0	4	0,1
retiree as noun	247	3,0	48	0,6	585	7,0	906	11,4	281	3,5
elders as noun	441	5,4	582	7,4	804	9,7	504	6,4	2144	27,0
elder as adj.	145	1,8	422	5,4	402	4,8	364	4,6	479	6,0
elder as noun	156	1,9	477	6,1	547	6,6	637	8	577	7,3
pensioner	10	0,1	21	0,3	24	0,3	16	0,2	10	0,1
total	4292	52,6	4179	53,2	7487	90,0	9603	121,1	8180	103,0

The word *retiree* is most often used in newspapers, second most in magazines and least often in fiction. The distribution of *pensioner*, however, is completely different. It occurs most often in magazines, followed by fiction, and has the same frequency in spoken and academic language. The remaining lexical items

are now *elders* and *elder* as an adjective and a noun. *Elders* appears almost three times as often in the academic section than in the second most used section, which is 'magazines', followed by 'fiction' and 'newspaper', it is least used in spoken language. *Elder* as a noun is used most frequently in newspapers and second most in academic language, while the adjective is used most often in magazines, and second most in academic language. Both of them, however, have the lowest number of occurrences in the spoken section.

If we add the numbers of each column, as can also be seen in Table 3, in sum, the words investigated in this work are used most often in the 'newspaper' section, followed by the 'academic' section. It is also remarkable that six of thirteen chosen words (*elderly* and *aged* as noun and adjective, as well as *elders* as noun and *elder* as adjective) appear most often in academic language, and five occur most often in newspapers (*senior citizen*, *senior citizens*, *retired* as adjective, *retiree* and *elder* as noun) . Only two words appear most often in another section, namely *retired* as a noun with a frequency of 5, however, it is followed by 4 occurrences in the 'academic' section; *pensioner* is most frequent in magazines, and neither followed directly by academic or newspaper, but by 'fiction' and has a divided third place between 'spoken' and 'academic'. The smallest number of occurrences are eight times in the 'spoken' section, six times in 'fiction', three times in 'academic' and twice in 'newspaper' and 'magazine'. It is noteworthy that some words do not occur at all in one or more of the sections.

Before being able to make a logical conclusion, it is necessary to take an additional look at the diachronic usage numbers, which are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Diachronic Distribution

	1990-1994	pm	1995-1999	pm	2000-2004	pm	2005-2009	pm
elderly as adj	3729	36,1	2801	27,2	2368	23,1	2080	22,2
elderly as noun	4	0,0	3	0,0	3	0,0	5	0,1
senior citizen	117	1,1	118	1,1	106	1,0	67	0,7
senior citizens	484	4,7	483	4,7	496	4,8	339	3,6
aged as adj	667	6,5	501	4,9	402	3,9	435	4,6
aged as noun	1	0,0	1	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0
retired as adj.	2100	20,3	1770	17,2	2149	21,0	1852	19,8
retired as noun	2	0,0	2	0,0	2	0,0	6	0,1
retiree as noun	177	1,7	117	1,1	173	1,7	236	2,5
elders as noun	1455	14,1	971	9,4	1123	10,9	945	10,1
elder as adj.	562	5,4	441	4,3	474	4,6	343	3,7
elder as noun	637	6,2	501	4,9	667	6,5	600	6,4
pensioner	34	0,3	21	0,2	12	0,1	14	0,1
total	9969	96,4	7730	75,0	7975	77,6	6922	73,9

Table 4 shows how the usage of certain lexical items developed over time. Again the numbers are shown as occurrences on the left of each column and per million speakers on the right.¹³ As can be seen, the use of *elderly* as an adjective has continuously declined over the years. *Senior citizen* is less used now than in the beginning of the 1990s, but rose insignificantly by one occurrence between 1995-1999 only to drop continuously until 2009. The plural form *senior citizens* dropped by one occurrence, then rose rapidly between 2000 and 2004 and then dropped again below its first surveillance of occurrence. Similar alignments can be traced for the usages of *retired* as an adjective, the adjective and the noun *elders*, as well as for *elder*. *Aged* as noun stayed the same in the first two quinquennials and vanished from usage habits in the latter two. However, the use of *elderly* as a noun has risen by one

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The size of the text collections for the periods are: 1990-1994:103.3 million words, 1995-1999:102.9 million words, 2000-2004: 102.6 million words, and 2005-2009: 93.6 million words.

occurrence from the beginning of the collection of corpus data, even though the number had declined by one occurrence in the middle decade. *Retired* as noun remained the same over a period of 15 years, but then the usage tripled between 2005 and 2009. The occurrences of *retiree* as a noun also fell at first, but then rose again, and are now higher in number than in the beginning of the corpus records. The use of *pensioner* declined and then slightly rose again, but is no way near the number of the first records in the COCA. In summary, the occurrences of only three lexical items generally rose in number as well as in occurrences per million namely *elderly*, *retired* and *retiree*.

4.2.3. The lexical items and their surrounding text

In order to be able to gain more precise information about the lexical items of focus I scanned the corpus for words within a range of five words before and after each item (+/- 5). More specifically I looked at nouns, adjectives and also verbs before and after the chosen terms. However, as expected, the verbs did not prove to be useful since they are not informative of semantic load, except for a few remarkable ones, it is not enough information to infer anything from the verbal data. Contrary adjectives fulfill this task very well, hence the adjectival collocates are dealt with in more detail, just as much as the surrounding nouns, since they also inform the reader about semantics to a certain extent.

4.2.3.1 Nominal collocates +/- 5

In Table 5, the ten most frequent nominal collocates within the defined range of +/- 5 words from the defined queries are listed. The left column presents the number of occurrences and the right column for each word states the frequency.

Table 5: The 10 most frequent nominal collocates +/-5

	elderly adj	frequ.	elderly n.	frequ.	elders n.	frequ.
total	6388	26032	29	29	3478	9272
1	people	1119	workers	1	jocelyn	200
	woman	616	west	1	minority	111
	man	501	vaccination	1	Dr.	109
	women	499	treatment	1	village	99
5	care	377	transformation	1	family	92
	children	337	support	1	community	88
	patients	288	subgroups	1	respect	82
	population	242	standing	1	elders	80
	health	229	resources	1	surgeon	78
10	couple	215	products	1	children	74
total of 10		4423		10		1013
	pensioner?	frequ.	retiree?	frequ.	retired adj	frequ.
total	309	437	1839	4549	7735	28807
1	workers	14	benefits	119	General	506
	benefits	9	worker	97	Army	395
	people	7	health	68	teacher	309
	children	6	employees	57	association	276
5	government	6	people	47	Officer	267
	war	5	care	45	Colonel	266
	widows	4	security	43	persons	246
	women	4	income	35	air	215
	trade	4	retirement	33	Professor	202
10	Rome	4	money	31	force	201
total of 10		63		575		2883
	aged n.	frequ.	aged adj.	frequ.	senior citizen?	frequ.
total	4	4	2659	5134	1491	4403
1	balance	1	children	77	students	350
	bird	1	cheese	64	\$	186
	plot	1	man	58	children	122
	variation	1	parents	48	ages	86
5			garlic	48	\$10	78
			home	47	\$12	78
			people	42	\$15	64
			school	41	center	58
			homes	41	people	42
10			care	40	\$5	34
total of 10		4		506		1098

4.2.3.2. Adjectival collocates +/- 5

Also for the adjectival collocates a table with the ten most frequent collocates within a range of five words before and after each lexical item of interest is included. The Table is to be read in the same way as Table 5 (the left column shows the number of occurrences, the right column the frequency number).

Table 6 : Adjectival collocates +/-5

		elderly adj	frequ.	elderly n.	frequ.	elders n.	frequ.
total		2142	8637	8	9	1192	3524
1	disabled	288	American	2	tribal	134	
	poor	272	specific	1	other	100	
	young	169	social	1	young	73	
	frail	149	incoming	1	Asian	68	
			European-				
5	other	144	born	1	American	64	
	white	142	environmental	1	traditional	53	
	black	142	concerned	1	immigrant	47	
	social	104	common	1	ethnic	41	
	sick	85			different	36	
10	rural	84			Indian	36	
total of 10		1579		9		652	
		pensioner?	frequ.	retiree?	frequ.	retired adj	frequ.
total		105	153	650	1728	1325	4401
1	federal	7	military	90	American	276	
	old-age	7	future	58	military	212	
	old	6	early	52	marine	122	
	elderly	6	current	48	high	68	
5	current	4	other	45	other	65	
	other	4	social	42	senior	64	
	social	4	new	33	active	62	
	royal	3	young	30	retired	60	
	poor	3	older	26	national	59	
10	military	3	recent	23	federal	58	
total of 10		47		447		1046	
		aged n.	frequ.	aged adj.	frequ.	senior citizen?	frequ.
total		3	3			433	2656
1	degenerative	1	middle	133	senior	1813	
	ocular	1	young	27	free	28	
	second-						
	growth	1	white	26	national	28	
			old	25	older	21	
5			infirm	25	social	20	
			other	24	onstage	12	
			poor	24	new	11	
			disabled	23	elderly	11	
			black	22	young	11	
10			aged	18	younger	11	
total of 10		3		347		1966	

As for *aged* as noun, one third is made up by the adjective *degenerative*. For *aged* as adjective the predestined surrounding text is *middle*, however, also *infirm*, *poor* and *disabled*, next to *young*, which is interestingly the second most frequent adjectival collocate. The results for *senior citizen(s)* are quite confusing, since the most frequent collocate is apparently *senior*, however, similarly to the results of nominal collocates it is immediately followed by the word *free*. A detailed evaluation of semantic prosodies is postponed until later in the paper.

4.2.4. Positive, neutral and negative collocates +/-5

The next step in the corpus analysis was to look at the 100 most frequent nominal and adjectival collocates in terms of neutrality or opinion expressing either positive or negative. The conditions for categorizing the collocates have been carried at my own discretion, however, always considering the objective meaning of a word as defined in dictionaries. Therefore the categories should be acceptable in terms of objectivity, although they can certainly never be completely objective. Assayed have been only the 100 most frequent collocates, disregarding the limitations that might occur as stated and explained in the section "Limitations of Quantitative Analyses". Furthermore the frequency of the most occurring words has been ignored, but solely the words among the 100 most frequent occurrences have been analyzed in terms of their semantics.

Table 7 gives an overview of the distribution of negative, positive and neutral words, as well as collocates that indicate medical status or health. The medical findings can belong to any of the other three categories. The word *syringe* for example, would be neutral and medical, therefore counted as 1 in each of the sections.

Table 7: Nominal collocates grouped according to their semantics

	elderly n	elderly adj	elders	retiree	retired adj.
total collocates	29	6388	3478	1839	7735
total of 100	29	100	100	100	100
negative	7	10	1	6	0
positive	0	2	21	4	1
neutral	22	88	78	90	99
medical	6	16	5	6	3

	sen. Citizen	aged n	aged adj	pensioner
total collocates	1491	4	2659	309
total of 100	100	4	100	100
negative	0	0	2	4
positive	1	0	2	5
neutral	99	100	96	91
medical	7	0	4	6

Table 8 shows the same grouping of words with adjectives. The structure and approach are the same as for the nominal collocates of Table 7, which was explained above.

Table 8: Adjectival collocates grouped according to their semantics

	elderly n	elderly adj	elders	retiree	retired adj.
total					
collocates	8	2142	1192	650	1325
total of 100	8	100	100	100	100
negative	1	19	10	8	2
positive	0	3	10	11	7
neutral	7	78	82	91	91
medical	0	11	5	2	2

	sen. Citizen	aged n	aged adj	pensioner
total				
collocates	433	3	902	105
total of 100	100	3	100	100
negative	11	1	14	18
positive	8	0	6	7
neutral	81	2	80	75
medical	10	1	12	3

4.2.5. Collocates -1 from selected queries

Finally, I also chose to look at the preceding words of only two queries, namely *elderly*, without further specification (i.e. whether it is a noun or an adjective), and *senior citizen(s)*. The reason for choosing those two was that one of my hypotheses was that *senior citizen(s)* is used more inclusively, while *elderly* is used rather exclusively. I therefore looked at each of the terms -1/+0 in the COCA, again at the 100 most frequent results. In this case I chose to differentiate between -1 and -1 (space) before the lexical item. In the following table this is portrayed as either '**elderly*' or '* *elderly*', '**senior citizen(s)*' and '* *senior citizen(s)*'. Table 9 shows the 35 most frequent results, the entire table can be found in the appendix.

Table 9: -1 and -1 (space) for *elderly* and *senior citizen(s)*

	*elderly	frequency.	* elderly	frequency
1	elderly	10677	the elderly	3916
	non-elderly	18	an elderly	1613
	nonelderly	14	of elderly	554
	aged/elderly	5	, elderly	310
5	youth/elderly	1	and elderly	284
	well-elderly	1	for elderly	232
	skyline/elderly	1	. Elderly	130
			many	
	semi-elderly	1	elderly	115
	photo:elderly	1	in elderly	110
	percentage-of-			
10	elderly	1	to elderly	110
	owners-elderly	1	s' elderly	110
	often-elderly	1	frail elderly	107
	near-elderly	1	two elderly	88
	middle-			
	aged/elderly	1	are elderly	87
			among	
15	bukaselderly	1	elderly	84
	10-elderly	1	their elderly	82
			his elderly	81
			that elderly	79
			one elderly	74
20			with elderly	69
			her elderly	69
			minority	
			elderly	64
			our elderly	61
			were elderly	53
25			" elderly	52
			some	
			elderly	50
			by elderly	46
			rural elderly	43
			or elderly	42
30			most elderly	42
			impaired	
			elderly	38
			them elderly	37
			all elderly	37
			black	
			elderly	36
35			on elderly	36
total		10726		8941

5. Attempts of interpreting the results and beyond

The interpretation of the results can only be seen as an attempt of interpreting the data instead of a fixed and completely true and representative account. This is due to the fact that there are quite a few limitations that go hand in hand with a quantitative analysis of the sort that was carried out in this study. In the following section the limitations and problems, as well as uncertainties about the results are discussed. Furthermore it is mentioned how these limitations affect the interpretation or rather constitute the impossibility of a true and final outcome.

5.1. Limitations of Quantitative Analyses

Before I start with the outcomes of the collocation analysis, I would like to mention some of the difficulties that a quantitative analysis brings about, and explain how I attempted to solve them. At first I faced the problem of analyzing the surrounding words of a lexical item. The first realization was that it is necessary to look at a wider range of words than only one before and after the query. This also means that the words within this range have a high probability of belonging to the previous or the following sentence or paragraph instead of the sentence the main lexical item occurs in. For example, if *weak* appears within a range of 5 words before the word *elderly* it does not necessarily have to mean that it also refers to *elderly*. It could well be the case that in a newspaper two articles that are next to each other, deal with completely different issues; e.g. the first one about the stock market, the other one about old people. Assuming that the first article ends with a sentence like example 3, and then the headline of the next article is example 4,

Ex. 3 'the exchange rates can therefore be said to be rather weak'

Ex. 4 'Elderly couple thwarts bank robbery',

the two words directly following each other, do not have anything to do with each other contextually speaking. However, if this was the case frequently, it can still be seen as remarkable. The question would then be why texts about old people are positioned next to something rather negative even though it is thematically not related. Interesting would then be to question whether that is done with a specific purpose in mind or whether it is simply coincidental. However, within a quantitative analysis all these questions will remain unanswered. That is why I decided to proceed with a range of five words, for the sole reason that it is striking when a word always appears in the previous or following surrounding text even if not in the same sentence. Certainly I always had to keep in mind that the problem of not being able to know whether the context is really in relation to the queries does remain a problem throughout the whole analysis.

Another limitation I had to face was that the collocates are listed in order of frequency, as well as alphabetically. If a word beginning with the letter *a* and a word beginning with the letter *z* both appear 3 times within the corpus, the first might be among the 100 most frequent words, while the latter is not. In this case I decided to list the words in the same way as they are listed in *COCA*, despite the fact that this means ignoring some collocates that are as significant as others, but are ranked further back due to their first letter.

The third limitation I discovered, is the difference in number of occurrences. If a lexical item is used very rarely, for example, it is only logical that the number of collocates is also low. If a word has a total number of 5 collocates, and the most frequent is 3 times, while the other 4 collocates appear only once this is quite a striking difference, when considering the percentages. If you then relate an occurrence of 3 times to another lexical item, where 3 occurrences of a collocate is the lowest frequency, it is quite difficult to decide how significant the number of 3 occurrences should be rated. Finally, I decided to mention the most frequent ones of each item searched, no matter how frequent they are in absolute numbers. This is therefore to be seen as a quantitative method of gathering data with a rather qualitative interpretation.

5.2. Impressions and Inferences

After the realization that there are various limitations in quantitative analysis it would be a contradictory statement to claim that I interpret the gathered data. Therefore I would prefer to call the process that is carried out in this section an attempt to make an inference about certain usage habits and discuss the reasons for these habits. Furthermore it will be discussed in how far language use or more specifically terms of choice, syntactic positioning and co-text may be significant for the creation of stereotypes: or more generally speaking how they influence societal attitude towards old people. Differences about the queries will be pointed out and related to each other and further inferences will be made. However, I would like to point out once more that what is done cannot and should not be seen as an objective interpretation of facts, but rather as one of many possibilities of understanding the numbers gathered from the corpus. Wherever the word *interpretation* or one of its forms appears, this is to be understood in such a way as explained above.

5.2.1. Interpreting Synonyms?

If one takes a closer look at Table 1 (4.2.1.), it becomes apparent that the synonyms for *elderly* as an adjective differ tremendously from those of *elder* as an adjective. For the latter, the synonymous words are undoubtedly related to positive semantic connotations (*head, chief, leader* and *elder*). All but one of four express a high rank or position, while for *elderly* the synonyms are rather neutral (*old, senior, elderly, aging, mature* and *aged*) except for perhaps *mature* which can be seen as rather positive. However, the assumption that *mature* functions as a euphemism rather than a really positive synonym lies near. A lotion for 'mature skin' usually implies that the word *mature* loses its positive connotation and can in the best case said to be neutral, but generally I dare say it conjures up rather negative images of skin.

Interestingly, for *elderly* as a noun there is no such thing as a synonym in the COCA. The same thing is true for *elders* and also for *aged* as a noun. An exception among all the synonyms that have been investigated, as shown in Table 1, are *pensioner* and *retiree*, as their synonyms are the only ones in that table which are identical in words and number. As far as *retired* is concerned, there are, as it is the case of *elderly*, *elders* and *aged*, no synonyms for their noun forms. For the adjectives there are seven synonyms listed in the COCA. The synonym that is most often used for the adjective *retired* is *old*, followed by *elderly*; *emeritus* with fewer occurrences and *discharged* as well as *superannuated*, which can definitely not be rated as positively loaded words. One lexical item that has been investigated for synonyms but is not shown in Table 1 is *elder* as a noun, for which there have also been no synonyms found in COCA. Strikingly, the synonyms that have been found for the adjective *old* describe something that has once existed and can no longer be used as for example *previous*, *one-time*, *outdated*, *outmoded*, *out-of-date* and *last*. Semantically positive synonyms do not appear at all for *old*. I decided to distance myself from the word *old* in the further analysis due to the fact that it is impossible to define more than 'noun' as a relating item. It therefore appears very likely that the word refers to items like tables or computers being *old* rather than to people. The general question that arises from the given synonyms is now whether the lexical attitude can be applied to the attitude that is shown to old people in everyday-life.

When looking at *aged* as an adjective, one can notice that it has at least one clearly positive synonym, which is *venerable*. The others (*old*, *ancient*, *elderly*, *aged*, *hoary*, *ripened* and *mature*) are somewhere between neutral and rather negative. The last entries of Table 1 are *senior* as a noun and as an adjective, which are both connected to rank rather than age with the COCA stating their synonyms to be *head*, *director*, *leader*, *manager*, *chief*, *boss* etc. as nominal synonyms and *major*, *higher*, *older*, *senior*, *chief*, *primary*, *leading*, etc. as adjectival synonyms. It seems as if *senior* is a word that is clearly inked to power; or at least creates this impression from looking at its synonyms. If this is really the case, or whether this changes depending on the co-text will be seen

later in this paper. Further, it is remarkable that a word, namely *senior*, once described something completely different from what it mostly describes today. Some time ago a *senior* was someone of high rank in an enterprise, to be commissioned by people of a certain age. The reason why *seniors* had this rank was that they had the experience to solve certain problems. Nowadays the *senior* position is often occupied by people, who would never be called a *senior* in the sense of *senior citizen*, but by much younger people. A Senior Creative Director or Senior Accountant can well be in their thirties. The change in language use and the structural changes are similar to what has been stated in the first chapter about the Senate and its members. The surmise that the synonyms of *senior* only peripherally describe people around the age of 65, but rather function as a description for occupational functions lies near.

In summary it becomes clear from the synonyms of the queries in Table 1, that words which are believed to be synonymous are not in the least used to describe the same entities. Among the search items of this analysis *pensioner* and *retiree* are the only exceptions, since they are the only two true synonyms according to the COCA data. All the other words are used for more or less semantically different purposes. This gives rise to the question which ones are used most often, under which circumstances in which text types and whether the textual surrounding of them gives us a clue about how they convey meaning. In order to answer these questions I first of all looked at the frequency of use in COCA, and the distribution of occurrences in sections such as 'spoken', 'fiction', 'magazine', 'newspaper' and 'academic', as well as at the distribution over time in intervals of five years from 1990 to 2009.

5.2.2. Interpreting frequencies, sectional and diachronic distribution?

The reason for the tremendous difference in frequency numbers, as shown in Table 2, between the supposedly completely synonymous lexical items *retiree* (703; 1.76 per million) and *pensioner* (81; 0.20 per million) (cf. Table 1), might

be due to the fact that COCA deals with American English, whereas *pensioner* is seen to be a rather British English word. In the *British National Corpus (BNC)* for example *pensioner* occurs 601 times (6.01 per million) although the corpus contains only a little over 100 million words and is therefore much smaller in size than the COCA. *Retiree* occurs only 8 times (0.08 per million) in the BNC, so it is evident that the choice of these synonymous words is strongly dependent on the variety of English used. However, it is also important to note that the BNC is not a contemporary corpus like the COCA but contains texts from the 1970s up to 1993, while the COCA only began in 1990. As a logical conclusion there are only three years of overlap and therefore an accurate juxtaposition is not possible.

However, there are other queries which are, according to the synonym analysis, not as synonymous to each other as the latter two lexical items and can therefore be analyzed more easily. In the case of *senior citizen* (408; 1.02 per million) for example, we can see in Table 2, that the singular form is used less often than the plural *senior citizens* (1802; 4.51 per million). Since the difference in frequency is so significant, it is necessary to question what reasons there might be to refer to certain people in the plural form much more frequently than in the singular form. One reason could be that *senior citizen* in singular and plural form is an impersonal way of addressing someone. Even more it seems as if it were extremely unlikely to call a person a *senior citizen* to their face, but rather as a term used in the absence of the people referred to. Considering it was the case that *senior citizen(s)* is used for impersonal communication about old people in their absence, it is only logical that the plural form is used more often than the singular form. This is, because people tend to use plural forms when they talk about people in general, as for example about *children, men, women, foreigners* etc. This use of plural definitions means necessarily that the language user refers to a whole group of people of a certain category, at least in the mind of the speaker at the moment of speaking. This would further give rise to the assumption that the plural form *senior citizens* is rather used as a unifying term, which also means rakishly throwing all people into one pot; This can certainly happen in a positive, negative or neutral manner.

The data in Table 3 (Frequency in absolute numbers and per million of the COCA sections) tells us quite a lot about the use of lexical items that supposedly refer to old people. From the data, it is evident that the queries show the highest frequency in the section 'newspaper' (9603; 121.1 per million), followed by the 'academic' section (8180; 103.0 per million) and the third section that shows a heavy use is 'magazine' (7487, 90.0 per million). The other sections, 'fiction' (4179; 53.2 per million) and 'spoken' (4292, 52.6 per million) show significantly fewer occurrences, in fact the queries occur roughly half as often as in the first three sections. Especially astonishing is the fact that such a small proportion (12.7 %) of occurrences is found in spoken language. The only section that shows a lower number of occurrences is 'fiction' (12.3%); however the per million number is still higher in 'fiction' than it is in the spoken section. This statistical evidence shows that the discussion about a certain age group is apparently very present in some sections, while it is rarely used in others. Interestingly the queries are most often used in academic language, newspapers and also magazines. Significant about that is that all of the three sections contain text types with the purpose to report and to analyze certain issues. The majority to raise their voices in these sections are certainly not old people themselves. Hence, it is supposedly a specific type of discourse that takes place about this age group in the texts of these sections. However, before we can make any further inferences it is necessary to look at the history of distribution and whether there have been changes in the past decades, which is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 shows the diachronic distribution of the queries. Note that only three of the lexical items, namely *elderly*, *retired* and *retiree* generally rose in number over time. Additionally, it is also striking that all three of the words that have been on the rise are nouns. While *retiree* is a definite noun, the other two are nominally used adjectives. Strikingly, the use of the adjectival nouns rose, while the use of their adjectival counterparts declined, (cf Table 4). It has to be pointed out, however, that all of the three nouns (*retiree*, *retired* and *elderly*) are very small in number; yet they are the only ones that show an increase in

number of occurrences. Looking at Table 4 it is easy to see that 'small number' means 5 and 6 occurrences as the highest number for the *elderly* and the *retired*, and 236 occurrences for *retiree* (as a reference value, the highest frequency is that of *elderly* as an adjective, which occurs 3729 times from 1990-1994). In general, however, the occurrences by which *retiree*, *retired* and *elderly* have risen are by far less than the occurrences by which all the others have declined. This gives rise to another important question. If the decrease of words referring to old people is higher than the increase, it is likely that the communication about old people has declined as a whole, even though, as discussed in the beginning of this paper, the age of people is rising constantly. This conjures up two quite contrary thoughts. Either people use different terms to refer to people of a certain age nowadays that have not been part of the analysis, or they simply do not refer to old people as often as they used to. One may suspect that language users stopped using supposedly euphemistic terms for old people. However this can be disproved, because also the numbers for *old* declined over the years. *Old* defined as an adjective and followed by a noun shows a drop of occurrences, and the numbers for *old* as an adjective in general dropped from 489.6 to 469.2 to 439.5 and finally to 419.9 per million speakers, which makes an outcome of 50587, 48285, 45083 and 39288 occurrences every five years from 1990 to 2009. This obviously rules out the possibility that the decline of our query occurrences is compensated by *old*.

Another possible interpretation would be that it is a simple fact that words used to refer to old people are simply used less frequently. This again can be interpreted in manifold ways. I would like to go into detail explaining two of them: The first possible interpretation is that old people are referred to less as a matter of ignorance towards them. This could then be seen as the expression of an attitude that conveys refusal to mention what is conceived as annoying. The second way of interpreting the data could be that the necessity to explicitly define and categorize people of a certain age becomes less important. If this is the reason for the decline of occurrences this could mean that less exclusion and higher acceptance of old people by and within society has already been achieved. Finally, both conclusions are strongly opposed to each other. The

first, meaning that the existence of old people is hushed up as a result of a denial of their existence; possibly as a result of self-protection. The second can be seen as being a quite positive result, proving a linguistically manifested acceptance of old people. However, the analyses of the sectional and diachronic distribution alone, is not sufficient in order to arrive at a real conclusion about language use, and about terms that refer to or describe being old. For exactly this reason it is necessary to take a detailed look at the lexical items in context instead of only in isolation, which is done in the next section.

5.2.3. Co-textual inferences about semantic load

As can be seen in Tables 5-9, I looked at the co-text of the queries in various angles. First of all each of the queries has been investigated for verbs, nouns and adjectives within a range of 5 words preceding and following them. The verbal co-text is not discussed, due to the fact that it reveals too little information about semantics, but can be conferred to in the appendix. Secondly, I also looked at the relation of the main lexical items to medical issues and carried out a general categorization of positive, negative and neutral collocates. Lexical medical relations can be seen as a further evidence for creating an image of sickness and frailness of old people. All of this was done solely within the 100 most frequently occurring collocates per word class, ignoring the overall number of occurrences.

5.2.3.1 Nominal Collocates

Table 5 shows the use of nouns within a range of five words before and after each query. It provides evidence for the co-textual usage of the lexical items, and shows that they differ at least in some parts tremendously in terms of their context. The adjective and the noun *elderly*, as well as the word *elders* are linked to medical issues quite frequently, which becomes evident even from the 10 most frequent occurrences of nominal co-text. However, for *elders* the most frequent noun in the surrounding text is *Jocelyn*, which is clearly to be rated as positive. Interestingly, *pensioner*, *retiree* and *retired* differ quite strongly from

each other. The adjective *retired* is almost only used for job titles and ranks, while *retiree* is obviously rather used in context of pension conditions, while *pensioner* only partly relates to these conditions but mostly to family relations and status, as for example *widow* and *children*. *Aged* as an adjective seems to be used not at all in context with old people but apparently rather to describe the age of children, cheese, or other things belonging to the culinary field, for which there is further evidence in the remaining 90 entries (see appendix). The noun *aged* is found in contexts that cannot conclusively be interpreted as belonging to any specific type of discourse as there are only 4 occurring co-textual nouns within the defined range. These nouns are *balance*, *bird*, *plot* and *variation*. *Senior citizen* seems to be used as a term mainly for entrance fees and cash discounts for old people rather than for anything else. It is striking that five of the ten most frequent surrounding words include a \$. The most frequent noun around *senior citizen* is *student*, third most frequent is *children* which strengthens the assumption of relation to discounts. Usually children, students and senior citizens are in one price category for various fees. This again supports the theory that old people and children are seen to be alike in terms of many things: Apart from the need for a guardian, and maybe even being spoon-fed, and wearing diapers there are also many other aspects in which old people and children seem to be alike. One reasons might be that they are seen as people with little income, because they are not actively contributing to the pension system anymore. Or, as already mentioned in the beginning of the thesis, they are seen as non-members of the reproductive cycle.

As one can see, the analysis of surrounding nouns may deepen ones understanding of the usage of words. It is, however, much more conclusive to look at the surrounding adjectives. For this reason the next chapter will deal with adjectival collocates in order to provide more information about societal attitude towards senior citizens through a textual analysis.

5.2.3.2..Adjectival Collocates

As from the collocating nouns one can also infer certain usage habits through investigating the collocating adjectives. As can be seen in Table 6., the adjective used most frequently with the adjective *elderly* is *disabled*. From 8637 occurrences, 288 are in the near co-text of to the word *disabled*. That makes a usage frequency of more than 3%. *Disabled* can be described as expressing 'incapability of doing something', and is immediately followed, by the second most frequent adjective in the co-text of *elderly*, which is *poor*. Also *frail* and *sick* are among the top ten adjectives that are used somewhere near, i.e. within a +/- 5 word range of *elderly*. As far as the noun *elderly* is concerned, the attempt of interpreting the adjectival co-text seems to be not as negative as that of the adjective. *Elderly* as a noun is most often used to define ethnic or cultural groups of people of a certain age. It is, however, generally speaking not very frequent with 8 occurrences (*American, specific, social, incoming, European-born, environmental, concerned* and *common*). Despite the fact that all three words are strictly speaking neutral, *concerned* is not exactly an adjective that conjures up positive images. And *social* and *common* also do have a somewhat bitter taste. Also *elders* is linked to ethnicity, but really remarkable is that according to the COCA there is a strong contextual tie to tribes for the word *elders*. This perfectly winds up with what has already been mentioned in the introduction of this paper, namely that indigenous tribes still seem to honor their old people more than Western industrialized societies do. This explains why the word *elders* and possibly also the imagined more positive semantic load of *elders* is found frequently in such a co-text. Moreover the word *tribal* is the most frequently occurring adjective with *elders*. The co-text of *senior citizen(s)* is strongly marked by financially related adjectives as for example *free*, which supports the theory from the nominal co-text about the connection to fees, entrances and discounts for *senior citizens*. However, an open question is whether for such purposes *senior citizen* is used as a true synonym for *retiree* or *pensioner*, which is not evident from the synonym search in the COCA. According to that neither *senior citizen* and *pensioner*, nor *senior citizen* and *retiree* are synonymous. An unanswered question remains to be which of the terms would be the best qualification to get discounts. Interestingly, an ID that

proves that proves that people are retired to get special prices for various payments is accepted in many countries.

The next queries to analyze are *pensioner*, *retiree* and *retired*. It becomes obvious from the data that all of the three terms appear in military contexts very frequently. In addition to that they also appear in the context of official or legal matters, (*federal*) at least as far as *pensioner* and *retired* are concerned. In the case of *retiree* there is a subtle difference; this word seems to be mainly used for future prospects about non-working old people; supposedly often in relation to the pension age debate.

5.2.3.3. Positive, neutral and negative co-text

In terms of being able to arrive at a point where a final statement about the impression of the gathered data can be made, and additionally a statement about how the use of certain expressions may or may not influence societal attitude towards old people becomes possible, it is now necessary to discuss the query co-text in terms of semantic positivity, neutrality and negativity. In this section the positive, negative and neutral aspects of the co-text have already been discussed according to Tables 5 and 6. However, they only show the 30 most frequent occurrences of nouns and adjectives with each of the queries. I then decided to additionally take a look at the 100 most frequent occurrences but not only grouped them in terms of positive, negative and neutral, but also added another category of medically related words. Therefore, 'medical' is an additional category which is however not separate from the other three; i.e. a word can be either positive, neutral or negative and additionally medical.

5.2.3.4. Categorizing the top 100 nouns

When looking at Table 7, which shows the results for the nouns of the co-texts, one can see that positively connoted words do undoubtedly appear. It is noteworthy though that even if the positively loaded words are the same in their

number of occurrences as the negatively connoted entries, they show lower frequencies than the negatively loaded words.

As you can see from Table 7, in all cases except for *elders* and *pensioner* and *senior citizen(s)*, negative nouns outweigh the positive nouns. As far as *pensioner* and *senior citizen(s)* are concerned, there is only one more occurrence in the positive group of nouns than there is in the negative group. In the case of the noun *aged* there are only neutral nouns, however the overall occurrence is only 4, which is a quite small number to infer anything from. Yet the mere fact that the number is so small has to be seen as an important piece of information. It can also be seen in the same table (Table 7) that medical terms occur with all words except for the *aged*. Still, it needs to be pointed out that no matter how positive a noun strictly seen is, it can also mean something that is not necessarily positive. The noun *benefit* for example appears to be clearly positive, but still that does not necessarily mean that it is used in a solely positive context. A sentence like example 5 drops a completely different light on the semantic meaning of the sentence:

Ex. 5 'they are not satisfied with the benefits they receive'

And also a strictly speaking completely positive or neutral sentence as in example 6, can be intended to mean something entirely different from what would be considered positive or neutral.

Ex. 6 'They always get the benefit'

Therefore the analysis of nouns is not a very reliable indicator when trying to analyze how attitude is constructed through text. This is more easily done, if still not truly reliable with adjectival collocations, which are shown in Table 8.

5.2.3.5. Categorizing the top 100 adjectives

Table 8 shows that in all cases but *retired* as adjective, negative occurrences are the highest in number. Additionally, very often the positive adjectives are

lower in frequency. The strictly negative adjectives surrounding the word *elders* for example are *frail*, *impaired*, *limited*, *poor*, *dependent*, *concerned*, *difficult*, *disadvantaged*, *ill* and *neglected*. With ten occurrences there are as many instances of negative adjectives as there are of positive adjectives. The positive adjectives are *healthy*, *important*, *wise*, *able*, *better*, *respectful*, *proper*, *respected*, *active* and *knowledgeable*. In the case of *elders*, the total frequency of the negative adjectives is 125, while the total frequency of the positive adjectives is 138. This means that despite the number of occurrences, the frequency is higher for the positive adjectives. However, it is important to keep in mind that the word *elders* is, as already stated above a rather positively connoted expression for old people. Still in this case the strictly positive adjectives are not much more frequent than the negative ones with a difference of 13 frequencies.

When looking at the adjectival *elderly*, the negative adjectives outweigh the positive adjectives by far. To be precise, the difference between the occurrences is 16. If we look at actual frequency, it becomes even more evident that the surrounding adjectives of *elderly* create a rather negative picture of the denoted people. The total frequency of negative adjectives is 1249, among which 288 are made up by the most frequent collocate of *elderly*, which is *disabled*. Other very frequent ones are *poor* (272), *frail* (149) and *sick* (85), before the first positive collocate *healthy* (49) with clearly lower frequency appears on the result list of the COCA. Certainly it needs to be considered that *healthy* is one of those positive adjectives that can easily be abused for neutral or negative contexts. Furthermore there is a large amount of neutral words that have to be rated neutral due to their true meaning in isolation. Still many of them are rather to be seen in the negative domain in some or even in most cases as for example *low*, *special*, *immune*, *financial*, and *increasing* to mention only a few. Even without including a certain percentage of neutral adjectives into the negatively connoted section of adjectives it is clearly evident from the data that explicitly negative adjectives occur more often in the 100 most frequent words in a range of five words before and after the words of interest in this study. If only some of the neutral adjectives were rated as rather being part

of the semantically negative group, the negative collocations most definitely prevailed, except perhaps for the word *elders*.

Medically related adjectives prove to be most frequently occurring in the adjectival co-text of *aged* as an adjective, with 12 occurrences, followed by *elderly* as an adjective with 11 occurrences and subsequently by *senior citizen(s)* with 10 occurrences of medical co-text. No evidence for medical co-text was only found in the analysis of the noun *elderly*, which only as a total of 8 occurrences, however. Even though the discussion has already been extended from the 30 most frequent to the 100 most frequent occurrences of co-textual nouns and adjectives, I still decided to look at one more aspect. The analyses above have all been carried out for a range of 5 words before and after the terms of interest, and the limitations going hand in hand with that have been explained in section 5.1. I then chose to take an additional look at words immediately preceding some of the queries. Strictly speaking I felt that two were of particular interest, namely *elderly* and *senior citizen(s)*.

5.2.3.6. Discussion of -1 precedents of *elderly* and *senior citizen(s)*

As can be seen from Table 9, the results do not differ tremendously. However, *elderly* is immediately preceded by *frail* 107 times and by *impaired* 38 times while *senior citizen(s)* is not preceded by any of these words, and neither by semantically similar words to *frail* and *impaired*. Most frequent for * *elderly* is *the*, while for *senior citizen(s)* it is *a*. The second most frequent occurrences are the reverse for each of the words; i.e. *an elderly* and *the senior citizen(s)*. However, while *the* precedes *elderly* 3916 times, it precedes *senior citizen(s)* less often with only 52 times. Considering the total occurrences of both queries, the percentages are the following: *elderly* (not further specified as noun or adjective), appears according to Table 210,993 times in the COCA. This means that the definite article *the* used immediately preceding *elderly* makes up 35.62% of all preceding words; i.e. more than a third. For *senior citizen(s)*,

however, which has a total frequency of 2,210, it is 2.35 %. *An elderly* appears 1,613 times (14.67%) in the COCA, and *a senior citizen* occurs 134 times (6.06%). Generally it can be claimed that either of *a* or *the* in their function as articles are used most often in both cases. Considering the fact that *the* is a definite article as opposed to *a(n)* it seems at first glance to be more respectful to use the definite article when referring to people. However in this case, *the* is a more exclusive type of language usage since it reduces old people to being members of a group, namely *the elderly*, no matter if they want to belong to this group or not. When someone refers to *a senior citizen*, however, it is not quite the same, because even though throwing this person in the same pot as all other supposed *senior citizens*, one at least recognizes this person as an individual within and not solely as any part of this group. Therefore I conclude that *a(n)* is used linguistically more inclusive, or in any case less exclusive than the definite article *the*, which leads to the conclusion that also *senior citizen(s)* is used in less exclusive ways than *elderly*.

Another striking aspect about the data in Table 9 is that * *elderly* is preceded quite frequently by possessive pronouns: *their* 82 times , *his* 81 times and *her* 69 times, which can be an indicator of enforced dependency of old people; in terms of being frequently referred to as someone's mother or father instead of an individual person. A further indicator for throwing *elderly* in one pot without recognizing the individuality of a person, is that also *all* is found in the preceding words of *elderly* but not as a precedent of *senior citizen(s)*. *Senior citizen(s)* is preceded by *every* which occurs less often than *all elderly*. Furthermore *every* is a word that states that there are many single units or people summarized with one word, while *all* does not consider single units of a crowd. Generally it becomes obvious from Table 9 that there are some differences between *elderly* and *senior citizen(s)* concerning inclusive and exclusive language use.

5.3. Summary of Impressions gained from the results

To conclude this chapter, all the results that have been gained from the COCA have to be summarized and roughly interpreted, as far as this is possible. As a first step, I looked at the synonyms for *elderly* and other words to find out how synonymously they are actually used. The preliminary outcome was that except for *pensioner* and *retiree*, none of the words are truly synonymous. The next step was therefore to find out how the defined terms of interest are distributed. The results show that most occurrences are in the sections 'newspaper', 'academic' and 'magazine'. This leads to the conclusion that old people, or *elderly*, *senior citizen(s)*, *retiree(s)*, *pensioner(s)*, *retired* persons, the *elders*, and *elder* people, as well as *aged* persons and the *aged* are generally rather reported about and analyzed in written texts than they are spoken about. The place of occurrence further suggests that all of these expressions are rather used by out-group speakers than by old people themselves, which makes all of the queries unlikely to be membership terms. This can also be underlined with Mautner's article (2007:51) as she quotes Hay (1998) where a "75-year-old [says] 'I am not elderly. I am old and proud of it'".

The outcome of the diachronic analysis was that only the three nouns *elderly*, *retired* and *retiree* increased in number of occurrences from 1990 to 2009, however, by only a few occurrences, while the frequency of all the other queries dropped. This gives rise to two possible assumptions, namely either that there is no need to explicitly refer to old people, as a positive consequence of societal integration, or it could mean that they are less referred to as a matter of ignorance. In order to find out in which context the queries are used, I then decided to look at the surrounding text of the lexical items. Since the 100 most frequent verbs, as I apprehended beforehand, provided no conclusive information as far as the semantic relation to the words is concerned, I only used nouns and adjectives for the discussion of the analysis. The nouns were only helpful to a limited extent and were merely useful in combination with the results from the analysis of the adjectival collocates. However, both were helpful in the investigation of 'semantic preferences' as well as the 'semantic prosodies' of the terms of interest. 'Semantic preference' is according to Stubbs (2001:88)

as quoted in Mautner (2007:56) "the co-occurrence with a 'class of words which share some semantic feature'". 'Semantic prosody' is as Louw (1993:175) argues according to Mautner (2007:56) "the consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates". The 100 most frequent co-textual nouns and adjectives have then been analyzed in terms of positive, negative, and neutral, where it became evident that negative and neutral surrounding words outweighed the positive ones by far. It turned out that there are differences in collocations and consequently also connotations. *Elder* and *elders* are definitely the most positively connoted words among those investigated. The most negatively connoted term is *elderly*, which proves my hypothesis right, which was that the 'semantic prosody' of *elderly* is rather negative one. The investigation of 'semantic prosody' was necessary for this paper, to support the argument that language use is related to the societal construction of identity. According to Mautner (2007:56) 'semantic prosody' is also referred to by Hunston (2004:157) as "evaluative meaning" and Channel (2000:41) calls it, "evaluative polarity". Mautner (2007:56) further quotes Orpin (2005:49) and states that "[t]hrough semantic preferences and semantic prosodies, respectively, it is possible to identify both the social domains that lexical items are associated with and the societal value judgments they carry". This then relates to chapter 3 and the 'circuit of culture' and clarifies how the use of language as a form of representation is linked to the construction of identity.

After the evaluation of collocates, I found that the information I had gathered was still not fully satisfactory for my analysis. Finally, I also looked at the words immediately preceding *elderly* and *senior citizen(s)*, hoping to find evidence that the use of the latter is more inclusive than that of the first. The outcome provides proof for the fact that although this hypothesis was right, it was not to the extent that I had expected. Generally, I can surmise that although the use of *elderly* as an adjective is quite frequent, has been declining somewhat in the past years. In addition to that *elderly* is rather negatively collocated and consequently connoted. Furthermore it can be said that *elderly* is used more often in linguistically exclusive ways than *senior citizen(s)* and possibly also

other words that are used to refer to old people, which provides further evidence for the assumption that *elderly* is not a membership term. Generally the concluding assumption that *elderly* is a pejorative term rather than a euphemism lies near.

6.Relating corpus and commercial texts

The last chapter of this work serves to investigate how the results of the corpus analysis apply to the specific text type of advertisements. A small variety of texts will be analyzed, compared and contrasted in terms of usage to the outcome above. As opposed to the corpus analysis, which was quantitative, with a rather qualitative attempt of interpreting the gathered data, the advertisement analysis will merely be qualitative. My hypothesis is that the language use concerning old people in advertisement is tremendously different from newspaper language and the other categories of COCA especially from the sections 'academic' and 'magazine' as well as from the 'newspaper' section. This hypothesis derives from the assumption that advertisements intend to create a surreal picture of the lives of old people, a type of 'wonder world' rather than a realistic picture of them. Advertisements, in this work, are assumed to portray old people in more or less unrealistic ways. Another hypothesis is that old people in advertisements are often ridiculed for the purpose of creating a comic effect. The interpretation of the qualitative analysis is supported by the outcome of other experiments that have been found in literature.

6.1. Difficulties concerning the Qualitative Analysis

In the beginning of the search for advertisements which contain either visuals of old people or lexical reference to age, I faced many unexpected difficulties I have not been aware of when I prepared for drafting this paper. Since these difficulties speak for themselves in terms of impressions people have about age in advertisement, I decided to include a section about them in the study and point out some interesting aspects. Afterwards, we will turn to the criteria, which I defined to make a text eligible for this study. The chosen texts will then be analyzed and finally they will be discussed and interpreted as far as possible.

6.1.1. Selection of Texts and difficulties in the search process

For the qualitative analysis I decided to deal with a few texts only. The analysis is meant to serve as an indication of how language is used in advertisement and which picture is created in this process, rather than being truly representative. At first researched on the internet and scanned American magazines for commercials that are related to age. However, this process was much more difficult than it seemed to be in the planning phase of this study. In the first phase of this paper I thought of including advertisements containing either old people, or textual reference about them. Generally I believed it would be an easy task to find such advertisements, and only found out later that my hopes had been disappointed about this matter. The first problem was that I found a lot of television commercial spots where old people appear in all kinds of situations, however, the print advertisements of the same campaigns almost exclusively showed the product and not the old people themselves.

6.1.1.1 Difficulties in finding eligible texts

Before the search for useful advertisement was started, I certainly had to define what I needed and come up with some criteria that the advertisement had to fulfill. I decided to look at print advertisements only, in which old people either need to be mentioned, or shown. From about six examples I wanted to use two

positive, two negative and two neutral texts to analyze as far as the findings would permit using this segmentation. The second criterion, namely that old people are referred to in the advertisement text also did not apply to any of the advertisements I found in the beginning of my research. Another problem was that even products that are aimed at a senior audience hardly ever contain any of the words *old*, *elderly* or *senior citizen*. Consequently a change of plans was needed and I had to look at every single advertisement without specifically searching for brands, products or key words but use my own eyes for judgment of eligibility. Without having the chance of preselecting a smaller number it was then possible to work through various collections of advertisements. The next problem then was to find an archive where print advertisements are collected. Even though there are plenty of advertisement archives on the internet, I soon discovered that the advertisements are only visible for members who pay a quite expensive subscription fee. It was a coincidence that I heard about *Lürzer's Archives*, the greatest collection of advertisements worldwide, where one can look at the advertisements for free, although only in very poor quality. Still, that was at least something to work with until the next problem arose, namely that the blown up images were not very useful because the writing was in many cases very hard to decipher, and therefore the textual analysis could not be carried out. Finally I decided to use those advertisements that are among the few I could find and use them, no matter how uneven the distribution into positive, negative and neutral portrayals was. I resolved to use some texts despite the fact that parts of the writing could not be read because it was too blurry, yet I still believed them to be significant in terms of representation. However when thumbing through magazines and newspapers, readers very rarely stop to read the small letter print in the bottom corner. They rather solely perceive the image. For this reason I deem it perfectly justifiable to use some advertisements without analyzing every letter of the written part.

6.1.2. Chosen texts¹⁴

As the main texts for the analysis I decided to use eleven print advertisements, for eleven different brands. The product range is rather wide and even though there are a few examples that are well expected to use or target old age in their advertisement campaigns, I also found many products for which the connection with age is rather atypical. The advertisements are introduced one after the other but will not be analyzed until the next section.

Figure 2 Pattex – Long lasting glue.



¹⁴ For the sources of the images please cf. the section 'visual references' in the end of this paper. I have done my best to state the sources as detailed as possible. If anybody should feel offended by the way of referencing however, I would like to be informed.

Figure 3 Calcimex Vitalize-Don't let brittle bones get in the way



Figure 4 Timberland

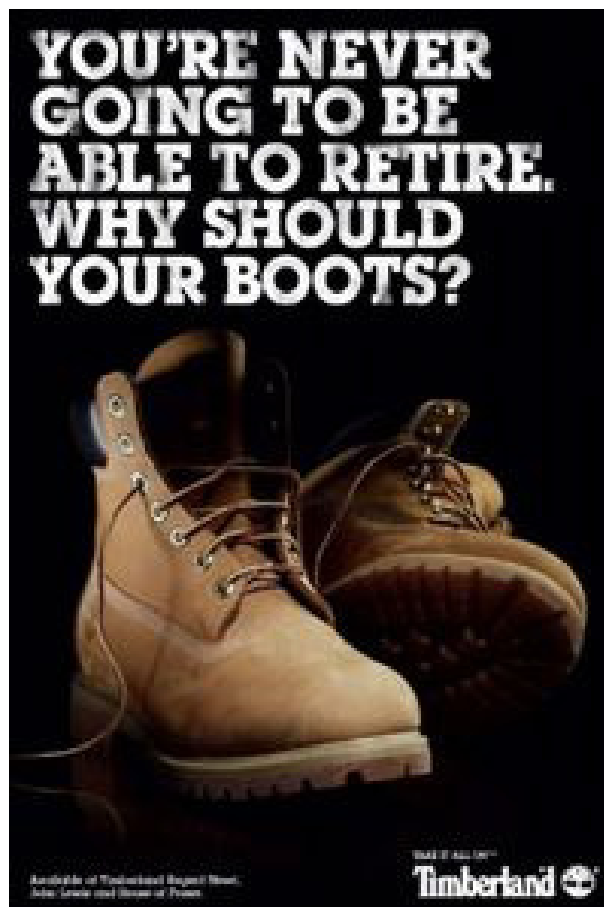


Figure 5

Buttero Boots -30 YEARS OF BOOTMAKING; PERFECT DOWN TO THE LAST DETAIL



Figure 6 Aniela-48 years of experience in handmade lingerie



Figure 7 Dannon



Figure 8 Old Spice

ATTENTION INEXPERIENCED GUYS

We've seen you, yes you, drowning yourselves with European manfume in sleek black canisters. Frankly it's pathetic. But there's hope: your presence here suggests that you have the desire to be an Old Spice man of experience. Excellent. So roll up your shirt sleeves and get ready for some serious experiencing. Ahoy.

CONTINUE

Figure 9 Ranipal Starch



Figure 10 Tooheys Old Black Ale



Figure 11 Naper Olympic Health Club

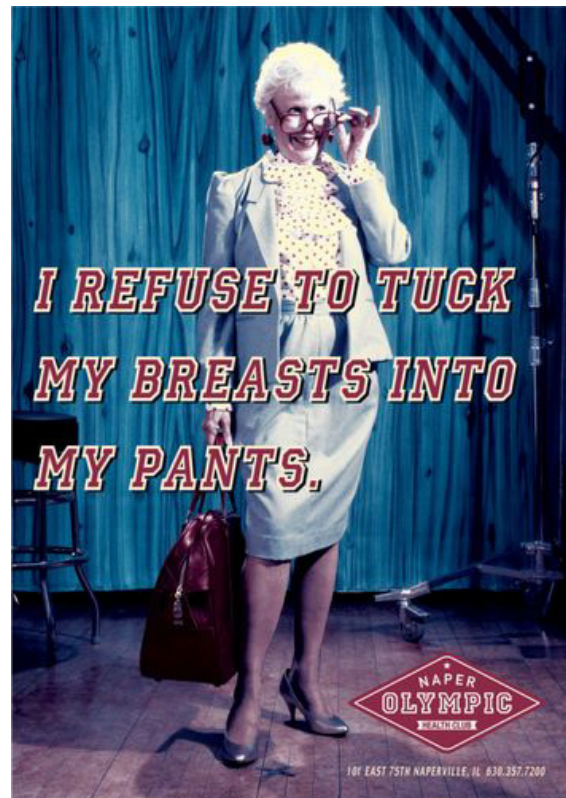


Figure 12 Ripolin-YOUR WALLS DESERVE A PAINT WHICH WILL AGE WELL.



6.2. Textual analysis

When looking at Figures 2 to 12, one will immediately notice that all but two advertisements depict old people or parts of them. The exceptions are the Old Spice advertisement which consists of writing only, and the Timberland advertisement showing the advertised product. Even in the advertisements where we only see body parts, it is clearly noticeable that they belong to a body that is not young, and undoubtedly aged. However, most of the advertised products in the examples above do not in any way have to do with age. The only advertisement where age really should be a topic is the one for Calcimex Vitalize (Figure 3), which is milk or milk powder with a supposedly very high amount of calcium. All the other print advertisements cannot explicitly be associated with ageing or old age; still old people are used to advertise these products. In some of the examples, old people are ridiculed for the purpose of comic effect, as it is done for example in the Pattex advertisement, very obviously in the ad for Ranipal starch, and also in those advertisements that pretend to be respectful to old people, but do still ridicule them to a certain extent. In fact, many of the examples above convey more than only one single message about old age and ageing. In order to be able to make a statement about the messages the advertisements convey, a more detailed analysis is required.

6.2.1. Proposed Associations

In order to be able to categorize the advertisements into certain groups, I came up with five factors to group them. These five factors can either apply to the semiotics or semantics of the advertisement, or both areas. The advertisements were defined according to what message they convey about age and ageing into:

1. ridiculing age
2. age experience
3. ageing body
4. ageing is desirable
5. ageing is undesirable

It is generally possible for the advertisements to convey more than just one of the above meanings, especially since some of the meanings are overlapping. When for example an advertisement conveys that aged people have a lot of experience, this can also mean that ageing is portrayed as something desirable, but the whole advertisement can be portrayed in a manner that also ridicules old people in a certain way. I came to the conclusion that this is best illustrated in a table in order to gain an overview. The example just mentioned would then be illustrated by a tick in the respective columns of the table.

Table 10 Propositions used in the example advertisements

	ridiculing age	age experience	ageing body	ageing is desirable	ageing is undesirable
pattex	x			x	
Calcimex			x		x
Timberland					
Buttero	x	x			
Aniela		x	x		
Dannon	x	x		x	
Old Spice		x		x	
Ranipal	x		x		x
Tooheys				x	
Naper	x		x		x
Ripolin	x		x		x
total	6	4	4	5	4

From Table 10 one can see that many of the advertisements convey more than one meaning. Solely the Timberland advertisement does not fit in any of the categories, since it does not ridicule old age per se. According to my defined categories, the number of advertisements that convey ageing or being old as desirable and undesirable are even in number, with four from eleven in each category. That old age means to be experienced is also conveyed four times in the sample advertisements, and explicit semantic or semiological reference to an ageing body is found five times. The highest number evident in the categories is however in the section 'ridiculing age' with six instances out of eleven.

6.2.1.1 About several conveyed meanings in advertisement

The categories that have been used in Table 10 will now be discussed in relation to the advertisements, and should serve the purpose of clarifying why I chose to group them accordingly.

Ex. 7 "Pattex-Long lasting glue" (Figure 2)

This advertisement works in various ways, but certainly as it is typical for advertisement it contains only a small amount of language. When looking at the image, it becomes clear that the old couple is supposedly married and has been married for a very long time. The woman seems to be quite happy about that fact, while the man seems to be indifferent. Therefore this advertisement works with a common stereotype that men are generally annoyed by their 'old nagging' wives, while women want their marriage to *last*. Since in a way the man does not seem truly unhappy after all, the image still implies that ageing is something rather desirable. Linguistically speaking *long lasting* is something that is positively connoted, especially since the semantic prosody of *to last* is definitely positive. The word *glue* simply functions to inform the reader about the product advertised, but also implies 'sticking to' something, or someone in that case.

Ex. 8 "Calcimex Vitalize-Don't let brittle bones get in the way" (Figure 3)

The Calcimex advertisement shows a very agile old man, who throws a much younger man into the air. Supposedly this image is supposed to conjure up a grandparent- grandchild age difference. The displayed action is usually something people do with small children. As can be seen in Table 10, the categories 'ageing body' and 'ageing is undesirable' are ticked for this advertisement. In this case, the corresponding information was found in the language rather than the image. *Don't let brittle bones get in the way* is a sentence that implies 'prevention' twice in only one sentence. First of all it starts with a negation that forbids doing something; if we then go on and ask what it is that we ought not do, the answer is 'let something get in the way'. 'Letting get

something in the way' has a clearly negative associative meaning, since something *in the way* is a disturbance or a barrier. Furthermore this 'something' are *brittle bones*. Note that the word chosen is not osteoporosis; but *brittle bones*, a logical choice since *brittle* alliterates perfectly well with *bones*. Still it is a medical term but sounds less sophisticated and can therefore be remembered much more easily and more quickly. In summary we have therefore the ageing body (*brittle bones*) and the undesirability of ageing, because you 'should not let them get in the way'. This is clearly an appeal to people that they can and should prevent ageing, and again considering the semantic prosody of *prevent*, ageing is clearly portrayed as something negative. After all we do not need to prevent things that are not seen as a threat.

Ex. 9 "Timberland- You're never going to be able to retire. Why should your boots?"(Figure 4)

As mentioned above, this advertisement does not fit in any of the defined categories in Table 10. Still it deals with the matter of age; the key word is *retire*. Another significant aspect is that the first sentence is, quite obviously, a clear statement, where 'going to-future' is used, which implies that the future event it is quite certain to occur. The second part of the text is an interrogative clause that is semantically linked to the statement, obviously implying that also the boots should not be able to retire. Since the whole advertisement seems to be linked to the increasing pension age, it can be interpreted in a similar way as the Pattex advertisement. The conveyed meaning is that the boots will last. And as already mentioned something that *lasts* is desirable. Still there is a certain kind of friction between the statement and the question, because even though most people probably want their boots to last, many people do not want to work until the last day of their lives. So in this sense to *last*, namely in one's job, can also be interpreted in a rather negative way. In fact, however, the advertisement functions through political criticism and a medially present topic that is presented with a good amount of sarcasm.

Examples 10 and 11: Buttero Boots (Figure 5) and Aniela (Figure 6)

Ex. 10 Buttero Boots - 30 YEARS OF BOOTMAKING; PERFECT DOWN TO THE LAST DETAIL

Ex. 11 Aniela - 48 years of experience in handmade lingerie

These two advertisements generally make use of the same strategy. They state that long experience in doing something exists in the company of the advertised product. This certainly implies that the quality of the products is good. First of all, because they have so much experience, and second of all because the company has existed for such a long time that logically also their products sell and have sold well, which is seen as an indicator of success. However, there are a few differences between the two advertisements. When looking at the Buttero Boots advertisement, one can read *30 years of bootmaking, perfect down to the last detail*, and one can also find a rather old man wearing extremely thick glasses. What is conveyed is that only people of a certain age can have 30 years of experience. Consequently, it is this experience that makes the boots perfect. The textual meaning conveys respect for old people and their experience. However the image, and especially the fact that the man wears the thick glasses ridicules age, as it functions as a proposition that he would not be able to see the details if he would not wear these humongously thick glasses.

In the Aniela Advertisement, the focus is also on experience. The text: *48 years of experience in handmade lingerie* works in the same way as the example of Buttero Boots. The difference is, however, that age is not ridiculed in the Aniela advertisement. The focus is rather on contrasting an old and a young body. It almost seems to imply that old people do not need not to wear lingerie themselves, but are well accepted to use their experience to make young people more beautiful. It is a young woman that has her breasts covered with the hands of an old woman, which is also 'handmade lingerie' of course. Still, if the cleavage of an aged woman was socially accepted and respected, it would

not have been a problem to show an old woman's bosom; it is a young woman's that is shown after all.

Examples 12 and 13: Dannon (Figure 7) and Old Spice (Figure 8)

Ex. 12 One of Soviet Georgia's senior citizens thought Dannon was an excellent yogurt. She ought to know. She's been eating yogurt for 137 years.

Ex. 13 ATTENTION INEXPERIENCED GUYS. We've seen you, yes you, drowning yourselves with European manfume in sleek black canisters. Frankly it's pathetic. But there's hope: your presence here suggests that you have the desire to be an OLD Spice man of experience. Excellent. So roll up your sleeves and get ready for some serious experiencing. Ahoy. CONTINUE

Both advertisements play with the issue of experience and also mention it expressis verbis. However, this is done in different ways than in the advertisements for Buttero Boots and Aniela. The exact wording of the woman's opinion about the yogurt is that she does not think it is only good, but *excellent*. The Dannon advertisement simply conveys that, if people are old they have experience (in yogurt eating). If they say something is good it has to be good, and all other people better believe that, which is obviously playing with the stereotype that old people are simply always right. Since being right is something desirable, it can be said that the message conveys that also ageing is desirable. Furthermore, the woman is not only old, but supposedly at least 137, and therefore she *ought to know*. It does not say 'she knows', which again is linked to the same stereotype that old people often believe they know everything. Additionally it could have been simply chosen in order to be safe if consumers do actually not like the yogurt, in order to prevent legal debates about untrue statements conveyed in advertisements. However, the normal advertisement reader will probably keep in mind that 'she knows' instead of that *she ought to know*.

Old Spice, chose a quite youthful appearance of their print advertisement. The *continue* button immediately reminds the reader of the internet and also the *attention inexperienced guys* clearly addresses young men. Furthermore a *guy*' is usually rather seen as a young lad than an old fellow and *inexperienced* is certainly also associated with being young. Furthermore, the reader is directly addressed in the imperative form and instructed what to do step by step. The ad even goes as far as implying that the reader of this advertisement has *the desire to be an Old Spice man of experience*. In this case, the word *experience* functions in a twofold way. First of all, it means maturity, and second of all it refers to the experience of using the product, i.e. on the skin. The advertisement also attacks another brand of deodorants in black cans, which is quite obviously Axe, a brand very many young men use, which is according to the advertisement presented here *pathetic* and obviously by no means comparable with the Old Spice's offer of *serious experiencing*. Therefore it can be stated that undoubtedly the ad honors experience, but also displays age as desirable, and even more than that conveys that maturing faster than you biologically ought to is necessary in order to be taken seriously.

Ex. 14 "Ranipal Starch" (Figure 9)

The advertisement for Ranipal is the only advertisement that works solely with images and the product name. However, it can be immediately identified as playing on ageing. Since we are familiar with the divisions of a picture like this, and read from left to right, it is clear that the image on the left side portrays the state before using the product, and the image on the right side portrays what happens after you have used the product. An old humpbacked man with a cane is portrayed, whereas a humpback and a cane are clear and also stereotypical indications of an ageing body; which is ridiculed. The picture on the right side shows that the same man stands upright due to his starched clothes, and does not need his cane anymore. The conveyed meaning is therefore that standing upright is better than being humpbacked, i.e. that ageing is not desirable, and the obvious markers of an ageing body are not visible after using Ranipal. This

again reflects the desire to get rid of the visible effects of ageing as far as bodily appearance is concerned.

Ex. 15 "Tooheys Old Black Ale- 'It's great getting old' "(Figure 10)

The advertisement for Tooheys explicitly states that *getting old* is *great*. Certainly this also refers to the ale, as there is also new ale, but the statement *there's a sign on the bus that says you have to get up for me* clearly refers to the advantages old people have and should enjoy. It implies most clearly that ageing is desirable. As also in the Ranipal advertisement, we see a cane and the hand of a black person. Still the old hand is in this case not exactly a reference to the ageing body, but rather to the product. The hand is old and black, just as the product advertised is *old black ale*.

Example 16: Naper Olympic Health Club (Figure 11)

Ex. 16 "I refuse to tuck my breasts into my pants"

Ex. 16 states what the woman in the Naper advertisement says or thinks. This clearly refers to the ageing body, since old women are said to have sagging breasts. However, the woman on the picture does not even wear pants, but a skirt. This is the first attempt of ridiculing her. The second ridiculing factor is that even though she is an old woman herself, she makes that statement, which has a quite confusing, or even shocking effect on the reader because she is not expected to say something like that. Even though Naper is a *health club*, the reference to the sagging breasts, which is by no means unhealthy but simply an aesthetic matter, implies that ageing is not desirable. Also the word *refuse* implies that she normally would have to tuck her breast into her pants at her age, but she will not do that, because she does not want to look old and therefore goes to Naper. This also plays on the fact that a youthful body with firm breasts is seen as desirable.

Example 17: Ripolin (Figure 12)

Ex. 17 "Your walls deserve a paint, which will age well"

Figure 12 shows an advertisement for wall paint. Admittedly this cannot be recognized at first glance, because what is shown are breasts growing out of a wall, and part of a radiator. Among all the example advertisements this is the advertisement that openly states that being old is not at all desirable. *Your walls deserve a paint, which will age well*, is written on the bottom in very small print. Whatever 'ageing well' is supposed to mean, in this advertisement age and the ageing body are clearly a threat. It is something people do not deserve, and looking old is ridiculed and despised. The connection to wall paint cannot really be captured in my opinion, except for the fact that the breasts grow out of the wall; there is no logical relation between wall paint and body parts. In the same campaign there is also the same picture with a very big male belly growing out of the wall, containing the same text as example 17.

6.2.2. Summary and Discussion about portrayals of age and their conveyed messages in print advertisements

As can be seen from Table 10 and Figures 2-12 and the linguistic examples 7-17, there are many ways of portraying age in advertisement in various ways. Advertisers use old people and the concept of age, ageing or the aged body for various purposes. The examples above advertise glue, dairy products, boots, underwear, cosmetic items and household articles, beer, a gym and even wall paint. In some cases the reference to age is logical, in most of these examples, however, the connection between the advertised product and age is not so logical. In more than half of the advertisements explicit or disguised attempts to ridicule age, ageing or old people are found. The ridiculing is not so much done with the choice of language, but rather with either stylized images or the contradictory display of linguistic and visual text. The use of oppositional

statements creates a certain type of comic effect. Even sarcasm is often on the expense of old people. Except for the Calcimex advertisement none of the others is truly aimed at old people. In all the other cases, old people are used to attract younger consumers, because the ads are worth while a laugh. Even when looking at those ads that do not ridicule age, as for example Aniela and Tooheys, one is tempted to smile.

Table 10 shows that according to my own judgment 4 advertisements display ageing as desirable and 4 as undesirable. Some of them do display ageing as desirable, but still ridicule that desirability again with their negative or stereotypical portrayal of age. Examples are the ads for Pattex and Dannon, as explained above. In the advertisements for Old Spice and Tooheys ageing is portrayed as something really positive, and those are also the only two instances that do not do anything to revise the opinion of the consumer in the end. From eleven advertisements analyzed, this makes a percentage of approximately 18% purely positive portrayals of old age and ageing. Certainly this percentage is by no means representative due to the limited number of texts that have been analyzed, and should be seen only as a number to gain a better overview and relate the conveyed opinions to each other.

6.3. Relating Corpus Data and Advertisements

After having looked at the corpus data and the advertisements, and at everything else concerning textual influence on societal attitudes, it is now time to compare and contrast the outcomes. Generally it became evident that in each of the analyses, namely in the corpus analysis as well as in the analysis of advertisements, the negative or rather negative representations of old age, old people and ageing outweighed the positive and neutral representations. An important aspect is, however, that in the corpus analysis the most frequent occurrences of the chosen queries have been found in the sections, 'academic',

'newspaper' and 'magazines'. This is significant because the audience of the three text types above has completely different expectations about the credibility of these texts than the audience of an advertisement has when browsing through a newspaper or magazine. When consulting academic texts and newspapers the audience should be able to assume that they receive information with a certain degree of truth. If this truth is formulated in a way that deliberately or not creates a certain opinion about old age and ageing, it is certainly to be seen more problematic than the same thing occurring in advertisements. First of all, people mainly do not read advertisements consciously or read the whole text, and second of all the vast majority of advertisement is not conceived as a reliable source for credible and truthful information. Magazines, depending on what magazines they are, are a mixture of newspapers, academic texts and advertisement. Certainly they should contain truthful information; however women's magazines are known to write articles about life counseling frequently, which many people do not take very seriously. In an academic text, the 'abuse' of influencing societal opinions can be generally considered as worst, since there are many more readers of newspapers than academic texts. It is probably most reprehensible when newspapers create a certain opinion about age or any other matter. Certainly it is legitimate to ask whether authors for any medium can solely use language that creates a completely neutral picture of age, which is a question that could theoretically be answered with yes. Practically this would take a very long time to become established in the field, if it is possible at all. The beginning, to motivate people to use age sensitive language would be to make them aware that the current situation is far from using neutral and age sensitive language, and hence also far from conveying neutral information about ageing, old age and old people. Only after having realized and internalized that references to old age are problematic in influencing opinions, people would perhaps agree to a more neutral use of language.

7. Conclusion

In this work I have considered various aspects connected to old people and the attitude about them. First of all it was necessary to get an overview of the current situation of old people and to deal with some event in the past in order to trace how this situation came about. It has been discussed what ageing and old age means in Western societies in comparison to other cultures. Another issue was in how far age and ageing is seen as positive or negative. A striking and significant realization was that there is apparently no unique definition for what old age is, when it starts and when it ends. Furthermore also the societal roles of old people have been discussed and some areas where the aged clearly function as contributors to both, society and their families have been mentioned. Furthermore, the overall ageing of society has been linked to the constant raising of the pension age in Europe and the U.S, as well as in Japan. As a next step we have looked at representation and the 'circuit of culture', i.e. how culture is linked with representation and consequently how representation is linked to language. How this affects the identity of people, and especially old people has also been investigated. All of this can be seen as the foundation stone that was necessary in order to be able to proceed with the textual analyses.

The first analysis was the corpus analysis of the COCA, which lead to the surmise that the attitude towards elderly people is rather negative than positive, although there are differences depending on lexical choice. The limitations of quantitative analyses, as well as the problems that arose due to them have been discussed. Finally, under careful consideration of the fact that a conclusive, final and absolute statement about the results is impossible, some conclusions have been suggested. The second analysis was that of the advertisements, which lead to similar results as the corpus analysis. In the end, the results of both analyses have been compared, and important differences in terms of credibility have been mentioned. The outcomes of both textual analyses, together with the insights gained from literary study proposes, under consideration of the limitations, that the societal image of old age, ageing and

old people is rather negative. Among the terms that are used to refer to old people there are slight differences in connotation and semantic prosody. The terms range from rather pejorative to respectful, however, the first ones are much more distributed than the latter terms.

With the insight gained from this work, there are two possible future prospects in terms of societal attitude. Since the number of occurrences of the terms used to refer to old people declined over the years, one possibility is that this means better integration and more respect due to less specific reference terms. The other prospect could be that the decline means a 'hushing up' about old people, a denial of their existence, which will by no means lead to more respect but rather to more ignorance towards them. Which one of the two theories is true and which is not cannot be inferred from the collected data. What can be concluded however, is that the current use of language portrays age rather negatively than neutrally or positively. I suppose that this is often done subconsciously, since the word *elderly*, was once intended to be a euphemism that nowadays has pejorative meaning. One attempt to change the societal attitude would be to make people aware of their lexical choice and its power of influence on others. Especially texts that are known for opinion-forming, such as in newspapers and magazines and also academic texts should function as a role model in this sense and try to use more neutral terms to refer to old people. Only then we could start trying to face age, ageing and old people with respect; which would be in my opinion the respect they deserve.

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Figure 3-Calcimex:
http://adsoftheworld.com/media/print/calcimex_milk_strong_old_bones
(Okt 6 2009)

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Creative Director: Tim Delaney
Art Directors: Chris Clarke, Adrian Britteon
Copywriters: Ben Stilitz, Colin Booth, Chris Clarke, Matt Moreland
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Copywriter: Luis/Gio
Art Director: Gio/Luis
Account Supervisor: Alain Laurent
Advertiser's Supervisor: Luca Sani
Typographer: Claudio Luparelli
Photographer: Riccardo Bagnoli

Figure 6-Aniela: <http://www.adsneeze.com/media/2008/01/aniela-handmade-lingerie.jpg> (Okt 6 2009)

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Appendix Table 1 : elderly as a noun

elderly as noun	nominal		adjectival		verbal		
	collocates +/- 5	frequency	collocates +/- 5	frequency	collocates +/- 5	frequency	
100 most frequent	29 of 29	29 of 29	8 of 8	9 of 9	9 of 9	9 of 9	
1	workers		1	american	2	used	1
	west		1	specific	1	swallowing	1
	vaccination		1	social	1	risk	1
	treatment		1	incoming	1	outpaced	1
5	transformation		1	european-born	1	obtain	1
	support		1	environmental	1	is	1
	subgroups		1	concerned	1	enhancing	1
	standing		1	common	1	be	1
	resources		1			are	1
10	products		1				
	problems		1				
	orphans		1				
	investigators		1				
	influenza		1				
15	immigrants		1				
	home		1				
	health		1				
	gallstones		1				
	gains		1				
20	factors		1				

	dysfunction	1
	disease	1
	date	1
	contrast	1
25	children	1
	care	1
	bacteria	1
	aim	1
	administration	1
30		

total		29	9	9
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spoken

per million	0,0
frequency	0

fiction

per million	0,0
frequency	0

magazine

per million	0,0
frequency	1

newspaper

per million	0,0
frequency	0

academic

per million	0,2
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frequency	14
1990-1994	
per million	0,0
frequency	4
1995-1999	
per million	0,0
frequency	3
2000-2004	
per million	0
frequency	3
2005-2009	
per million	0,1
frequency	5

Appendix Table 2: elderly as an adjective

nominal collocates +/- 5			adjectival collocates +/- 5			verbal collocates +/- 5	
elderly as an adjective							
100 most frequent	100 of 6388	frequency of 26032	100 of 2142	frequency of 8637	100 of 2777	frequency of 14784	
1	people		1119	disabled	288	are	840
	woman		616	poor	272	is	606
	man		501	young	169	was	489
	women		499	frail	149	have	426
5	care		377	other	144	were	394
	children		337	white	142	be	344

	patients	288	black	142	had	287
	population	242	social	104	`s	183
	health	229	sick	85	has	177
10	couple	215	rural	84	will	174
	men	194	elderly	84	would	147
	residents	165	american	78	been	143
	person	153	ill	68	can	143
	parents	153	old	59	do	141
15	americans	144	large	58	may	119
	home	143	legal	56	said	117
	services	141	likely	51	help	94
	percent	127	mental	50	could	91
	program	114	new	50	living	89
20	group	113	small	49	care	77
	persons	109	healthy	49	being	74
	programs	103	asian	46	caring	70
	homes	97	medical	45	make	66
	medicare	92	impaired	44	says	66
25	number	90	african	44	found	64
	life	88	chinese	44	did	63
	problems	88	older	43	see	59
	lady	87	nursing	42	need	58
	needs	87	homeless	42	get	57
30	family	86	growing	42	live	56
	minority	85	infirm	41	should	55
	groups	83	low-income	41	`re	53
	gentleman	82	low	38	say	52
	members	82	middle-aged	38	take	47
35	years	82	vulnerable	38	died	43
	mother	79	ethnic	37	going	41
	individuals	77	long-term	36	working	39
	study	72	higher	36	came	38
	age	68	high	35	asked	37

40	poverty	64	jewish	35	provide	37
	subjects	63	special	33	know	37
	community	62	younger	32	made	37
	clients	59	federal	32	named	36
	families	59	common	31	come	36
45	patient	59	blind	30	helping	36
	time	57	hispanic	30	become	35
	adults	56	immune	28	taking	35
	million	56	chronic	28	does	34
	insurance	54	single	28	might	34
50	housing	53	local	27	killed	33
	citizens	52	senior	26	reported	33
	security	52	mexican	25	work	33
	immigrants	51	important	25	include	32
	risk	51	female	25	used	31
55	benefits	49	greater	24	pay	31
	neighbor	49	good	24	dressed	30
	father	47	available	24	find	30
	relatives	46	different	23	think	30
	support	46	russian	23	told	30
60	couples	45	physical	22	having	29
	participants	45	japanese	22	go	29
	drivers	44	long	22	want	29
	house	43	lower	21	lived	29
	nursing	43	limited	21	left	29
65	populations	42	handicapped	21	needed	28
	disease	41	financial	21	seen	28
	year	41	pregnant	21	housing	28
	cases	40	private	21	getting	27
	prescription	40	public	21	`d	27
70	way	40	little	20	sat	27
	drugs	39	male	20	visit	27
	majority	39	increasing	20	wearing	26

	system	39	difficult	20	talking	26
	problem	39	certain	20	sitting	26
75	lot	38	able	20	looked	26
	case	38	indian	19	making	26
	service	37	functional	19	serving	25
	alcohol	36	immigrant	19	support	25
	drug	35	urban	19	took	25
80	depression	35	only	18	must	24
	abuse	35	recent	18	called	24
	child	35	economic	18	ca	23
	society	35	cognitive	17	serve	23
	work	35	future	17	remain	23
85	hospital	34	fixed	17	given	22
	widow	34	residential	17	feel	22
	day	33	strong	16	`ve	22
	help	33	high-risk	16	helped	21
	ladies	33	increased	16	die	21
90	parent	33	major	16	afford	21
	relative	33	concerned	16	saw	21
	research	33	current	16	receive	21
	states	33	indigent	15	put	20
	assistance	32	great	15	needs	20
95	death	32	significant	15	`m	20
	income	32	retired	15	let	20
	new	31	serious	15	leave	20
	incomes	31	national	15	keep	20
	lives	31	traditional	15	taken	20
100	caregivers	31	unemployed	14	used	19

total

10.090

4.262

7.778

spoken	
per million	17,5
frequency	1428
fiction	
per million	19,3
frequency	1516
magazine	
per million	30,9
frequency	2575
newspaper	
per million	28,2
frequency	2235
academic	
per million	39,8
frequency	3158
1990-1994	
per million	36,1
frequency	3729
1995-1999	
per million	27,2
frequency	2801
2000-2004	
per million	23,1
frequency	2368
2005-2009	
per million	22,2
frequency	2080

Appendix Table 3: elders as noun

	nominal collocates +/- 5	frequency	adjectival collocates +/- 5	frequency	verbal collocates +/- 5	frequency	
elders as a noun							
100 most frequent	of 3478	of 9272	of 1192	of 3524	of 1871	of 6690	
	1	jocelyn	200	tribal	134	are	277
		minority	111	other	100	is	227
		dr	109	young	73	have	220
		village	99	asian	68	were	188
	5	family	92	american	64	was	173
		community	88	traditional	53	be	134
		respect	82	immigrant	47	had	127
		elders	80	ethnic	41	do	86
		surgeon	78	different	36	would	69
	10	children	74	indian	36	will	67
		general	73	local	36	been	55
		church	61	frail	35	said	54
		people	58	male	33	`s	52
		leaders	51	new	31	may	51
	15	group	50	native	29	can	50
		women	49	social	29	respect	44
		care	47	healthy	29	say	39
		council	47	rural	28	says	39
		authority	46	political	27	told	38
	20	party	44	religious	26	has	37
		members	40	important	25	did	37
		clan	38	cultural	25	know	34
		zion	38	chinese	24	could	32
		parents	36	indigenous	24	see	28
	25	men	35	korean	23	used	26
		protocols	33	old	23	make	26

	wisdom	32	respected	22	must	25
	groups	32	impaired	20	speak	25
	needs	30	good	17	take	24
30	life	29	older	17	tell	24
	health	28	younger	16	get	24
	services	27	wise	14	being	23
	time	27	great	14	taught	23
	way	25	high	13	`re	21
35	youths	25	living	13	asked	21
	role	25	likely	13	help	21
	knowledge	25	white	13	made	21
	culture	25	spiritual	13	look	21
	families	24	only	13	become	20
40	tribe	24	limited	12	called	20
	stories	24	black	12	came	20
	chiefs	23	african	12	come	19
	communities	22	current	12	find	19
	home	21	female	11	call	18
45	generation	21	oral	11	should	18
	students	21	poor	11	`ve	17
	support	21	senior	11	live	17
	society	20	personal	10	learned	17
	town	20	small	10	meet	17
50	percent	20	strong	10	might	17
	power	20	etxtended	10	learn	16
	place	19	greater	10	spoke	16
	U.S.	19	large	10	provided	16
	youth	19	dependent	10	reported	16
55	officials	17	diverse	10	sat	15
	mr	17	early	10	show	15
	age	17	able	10	listen	15
	programs	16	cheyenne	10	passed	15
	years	16	complex	9	got	15

60	work	16	conservative	9	need	14
	teachers	16	long	9	sit	14
	states	16	sure	9	talk	14
	united	15	somali	9	want	14
	peers	15	national	8	took	14
65	numbers	15	ritual	8	think	13
	adults	15	public	8	wanted	13
	advice	14	little	8	remain	13
	city	14	higher	8	knew	13
	deacons	14	concerned	8	let	13
70	others	14	common	8	give	13
			community-			
	generations	14	dwelling	8	feel	13
	language	14	difficult	8	`d	13
	susanna	14	disadvantaged	8	ask	12
	service	14	elderly	8	go	12
75	research	14	available	8	having	12
	system	13	better	7	held	12
	things	13	aboriginal	7	led	12
	juniors	13	active	7	living	12
	interviews	13	afghan	7	lost	12
80	house	13	entire	7	put	12
	part	13	future	7	provide	11
	priests	13	late	7	received	11
	day	13	learned	7	saying	11
	company	13	ill	7	seen	11
85	case	13	racial	7	sent	11
	ancestors	12	recent	7	share	11
	experience	12	northern	7	teach	11
	problems	12	mormon	7	taken	11
	population	12	physical	7	listening	11
90	kashaya	12	specific	7	interviewed	11
	leadership	12	various	7	given	11

		tradition	12	urban	6	gathered	11
		world	12	special	6	began	11
		values	11	married	6	care	11
	95	state	11	medical	6	brought	10
		lineage	11	neglected	6	became	10
		jocelyn	11	respectful	6	decided	10
		importance	11	proper	6	found	10
		government	11	right	6	participate	10
	100	ones	11	knowledgeable	6	play	10
total			3047		1806		3325
spoken							
		per million	5,4				
		frequency	441				
fiction							
		per million	7,4				
		frequency	582				
magazine							
		per million	9,7				
		frequency	804				
newspaper							
		per million	6,4				
		frequency	504				
academic							
		per million	27,0				
		frequency	2144				
1990-1994							
		per million	14,1				
		frequency	1455				
1995-1999							
		per million	9,4				

frequency	971
2000-2004	
per million	10,9
frequency	1123
2005-2009	
per million	10,1
frequency	945

Appendix Table 4: senior citizen(s) as noun

	nominal collocates +/- 5	frequency	adjectival collocates +/- 5	frequency	verbal collocates +/- 5	frequency
senior citizen?.[n*] as noun						
100 most frequent	of 1491	of 4403	of 433	of 2656	of 730	of 1987
	1 students		350 senior		1813 are	146
	\$		186 free		28 have	76
	children		122 national		28 is	62
	ages		86 older		21 be	44
	5 \$10		78 social		20 will	41
	\$12		78 onstage		12 `s	40
	\$15		64 new		11 can	27
	center		58 elderly		11 were	27
	people		42 young		11 do	24
	10 \$5		34 younger		11 call	23
	\$20		33 disabled		10 `re	23
	program		30 old		10 would	20
	\$8		29 other		9 been	19

	college	27	fine	9	get	18
15	\$3	26	special	9	make	18
	groups	26	low-income	8	had	17
	medicare	25	local	7	has	16
	\$18	24	good	7	said	15
	group	23	fixed	7	help	14
20	\$7	22	big	7	was	14
	county	21	cultural	6	want	13
	\$11	20	homeless	6	work	11
	age	19	nursing	6	working	11
	health	19	medical	6	living	10
25	home	18	poor	5	made	9
	security	18	high	5	see	9
	adults	18	economic	5	should	9
	community	18	fair	5	going	9
	council	17	average	5	helping	8
30	Atlanta	17	single	5	did	8
	prescription	17	rich	5	come	8
	services	16	retired	4	scare	8
	\$9	16	united	4	need	8
	day	16	sure	4	know	8
35	theatre	16	American	4	`ve	8
	women	15	able	4	take	8
	country	15	black	4	talking	7
	families	15	great	4	used	7
	\$16	15	handicapped	4	might	7
40	care	15	long-term	4	must	7
	homes	15	little	4	says	7
	members	15	living	4	say	7
	ID	13	popular	4	could	7
	residents	13	public	4	bring	7
45	programs	13	real	4	having	7
	complex	13	military	4	go	7

	drug	12	newnan	4	gives	6
	arts	12	nearby	3	giving	6
	\$6	12	large	3	getting	6
50	percent	12	INC	3	give	6
	school	12	Jewish	3	gwinnett	6
	million	12	happy	3	build	6
	kids	12	better	3	being	6
	law	11	highest	3	afford	6
55	lot	11	increasing	3	roswell	6
	housing	11	concerned	3	protect	6
	henry	11	attractive	3	pay	6
	information	10	available	3	'll	6
	\$14	10	blue	3	using	6
60	bus	10	additional	3	understand	6
	citizens	10	ethnic	3	think	6
	work	10	eligible	3	taken	5
	centers	9	downtown	3	sponsored	5
	advance	9	driving	3	trying	5
65	America	9	whole	3	visit	5
	insurance	9	working	3	vote	5
	money	9	true	2	may	5
	plan	9	tiny	2	live	5
	population	9	western	2	looking	5
70	number	9	with	2	keep	5
	park	8	top	2	'm	5
	millions	8	vigorous	2	meet	5
	meals	8	professional	2	provide	5
	incomes	8	sick	2	asked	5
75	area	8	senile	2	avoid	4
	\$4	8	small	2	ca	4
	\$2	8	rural	2	got	4
	art	8	considerable	2	given	4
	benefits	8	escalating	2	find	4

80	years	8	full	2	forcing	4
	tour	8	future	2	does	4
	station	8	gay	2	put	4
	st	8	addicted	2	offer	4
	tax	8	alive	2	include	4
85	stages	7	affordable	2	lost	4
	spelman	7	assisted	2	like	4
	state	7	assisted-living	2	left	4
	street	7	civic	2	try	4
	youth	7	blessed	2	shows	4
90	boomers	7	Canadian	2	taking	4
	\$12.50	7	corporate	2	talk	4
	\$17	7	important	2	told	4
	apartments	7	historic	2	took	3
	drugs	7	higher	2	thought	3
95	discount	7	hot	2	tell	3
	farmers	7	huge	2	tend	3
	classes	7	golden	2	speak	3
	coverage	7	greatest	2	spending	3
	dance	7	grand	2	wanted	3
100	parents	7	growing	2	walk	3
total		2260		2297		1150

	senior citizen		senior citizen?
spoken			
per million	1,1		5,1
frequency	86		416
fiction			
per million	0,5		0,8
frequency	42		60
magazine			
per million	0,9		3,4

frequency	75	282
newspaper		
per million	2,0	11,5
frequency	159	911
academic		
per million	0,5	1,5
frequency	42	122
1990-1994		
per million	1,1	4,7
frequency	117	484
1995-1999		
per million	1,1	4,7
frequency	118	483
2000-2004		
per million	1,0	4,8
frequency	106	496
2005-2009		
per million	0,7	3,6
frequency	67	339

Appendix Table 5: pensioner(s) as noun

	nominal collocates +/- 5	frequency	adjectival collocates +/- 5	frequency	verbal collocates +/- 5	frequency
pensioner?[n*]						
100 most frequent	of 309	of 437	of 105	of 153	of 160	of 257
1 workers			14 federal		7 are	26
benefits			9 old-age		7 would	9
people			7 old		6 is	8

	children	6	elderly	6	have	7
5	government	6	current	4	be	7
	war	5	other	4	were	7
	widows	4	social	4	will	4
	women	4	royal	3	do	4
	trade	4	poor	3	had	4
10	Rome	4	military	3	get	3
	million	4	civil	3	having	3
	millions	4	disabled	2	can	3
	money	4	black	2	was	3
	men	4	medical	2	`s	3
15	gentlemen	3	older	2	receive	3
	groups	3	heavy	2	received	2
	investors	3	impoverished	2	`re	2
	employees	3	legal	2	reduced	2
	farmers	3	unemployed	2	see	2
20	age	3	responsible	2	lost	2
	month	3	retired	1	must	2
	others	3	unpaid	1	paying	2
	party	3	unsuspecting	1	said	2
	payments	3	up	1	subsist	2
25	population	3	well	1	taken	2
	students	3	white	1	took	2
	security	3	whole	1	want	2
	teachers	3	withholding	1	collect	2
	system	3	working	1	been	2
30	union	3	worried	1	buying	2
	years	3	younger	1	give	2
	pensions	2	scared	1	going	2
	veterans	2	selective	1	could	2
	support	2	Serbian	1	covered	1
35	transportation	2	sole	1	creating	1
	salary	2	stuck	1	dancing	1

	number	2	television-set	1	defend	1
	retirement	2	tough	1	developed	1
	rights	2	undocumented	1	die	1
40	president	2	legendary	1	discovered	1
	pbgc	2	less-productive	1	got	1
	Natasha	2	like	1	govern	1
	members	2	little	1	has	1
	migrant	2	local	1	go	1
45	promises	2	lower	1	getting	1
	rands	2	means-tested	1	heckling	1
	service	2	industrial	1	help	1
	bodyguard	2	Japanese	1	hold	1
	artists	2	lavish	1	huddled	1
50	care	2	high	1	hurt	1
	cash	2	high-income	1	increase	1
	center	2	impossible	1	informed	1
	deaths	2	minimum	1	invested	1
	cost-of-living	2	new	1	joined	1
55	dollars	2	off	1	keep	1
	health	2	previous	1	know	1
	fund	2	private	1	known	1
	line	2	qualified	1	left	1
	life	2	real	1	lift	1
60	lot	2	remaining	1	lined	1
	lovers	1	resourceful	1	lived	1
	lung	1	pastoral	1	loitering	1
	man	1	patchy	1	loosening	1
	manufacturing	1	pathetic	1	lose	1
65	marks	1	patient	1	losing	1
	marshals	1	bored	1	ca	1
	means	1	British	1	begins	1
	means-test	1	budget-conscious	1	broken	1
	lifestyles	1	Canadian	1	beefing	1

70	limelight	1	caved-in	1	affected	1
	grandchildren	1	Chilean	1	afford	1
	grandmothers	1	de	1	appealing	1
	loan	1	decent	1	comes	1
	men-at-arms	1	democratic	1	confronted	1
75	mid-august	1	derelict	1	contributed	1
	funds	1	desperate	1	contributing	1
	garrison	1	destitute	1	cost	1
	gomes	1	able	1	categorize	1
	guard	1	accurate	1	chatted	1
80	guest	1	alive	1	choosing	1
	guide	1	American	1	double	1
	guys	1	angry	1	earning	1
	Irene	1	annual	1	embraced	1
	Israel	1	average	1	ensure	1
85	Japan	1	battle-hardened	1	exchange	1
	June	1	big	1	exempt	1
	Kileh	1	early	1	exempting	1
	Kremlin	1	creative	1	expect	1
	labor	1	employed	1	expired	1
90	laugh	1	equitable	1	favored	1
	league	1	European	1	fell	1
	lech	1	extra	1	filled	1
	ledge	1	facto	1	filling	1
	liabilities	1	fed	1	find	1
95	liberals	1	feeble	1	firing	1
	license	1	fixed	1	floating	1
	heat	1	flexible	1	found	1
	highly-paid	1	free	1	freeing	1
	history	1	French	1	frighten	1
100	home	1	full	1	work	1
total		228	148		197	

spoken	
per million	0,4
frequency	29
fiction	
per million	0,2
frequency	17
magazine	
per million	0,6
frequency	53
newspaper	
per million	0,7
frequency	54
academic	
per million	0,5
frequency	43
1990-1994	
per million	0,8
frequency	87
1995-1999	
per million	0,4
frequency	41
2000-2004	
per million	0,3
frequency	34
2005-2009	
per million	0,4
frequency	35

Appendix Table 6: retiree(s) as noun

retiree?.[n*]	nominal collocates +/- 5	frequency	adjectival collocates +/- 5	frequency	verbal collocates +/- 5	frequency
100 most frequent	of 1839	of 4549	of 650	of 1728	of 1003	of 3321
	1 benefits		119 military		90 are	265
	worker		97 future		58 have	138
	health		68 early		52 is	102
	employees		57 current		48 be	101
	5 people		47 other		45 will	96
	care		45 social		42 would	75
	security		43 new		33 were	52
	income		35 young		30 pay	39
	retirement		33 older		26 can	36
	10 money		31 recent		23 has	36
	million		30 federal		18 get	32
	number		30 affluent		16 had	31
	retirees		30 active		15 do	30
	pensions		29 financial		15 `s	28
	15 pension		25 large		15 should	26
	years		25 local		13 says	25
	service		24 medical		13 said	25
	percent		24 smaller		11 may	25
	families		24 American		11 work	23
	20 age		23 fixed		10 was	23
	dependents		23 elderly		10 make	21
	tax		23 growing		10 live	21
	state		22 private		10 been	21
	group		22 younger		10 need	20
	25 medicare		22 popular		9 want	20
	students		20 old		9 say	20

	year	18	traditional	9	take	17
	ratio	17	fellow	9	provide	17
	lot	17	greater	8	could	17
30	government	17	better	8	`ve	16
	college	17	single	8	living	14
	company	16	real	8	moved	12
	coverage	16	past	8	receive	12
	area	16	near	8	see	12
35	benefit	16	likely	8	move	11
	insurance	16	urban	8	making	11
	members	16	well-off	8	help	10
	incomes	15	lower	7	come	10
	time	15	monthly	7	`re	10
40	U.S:	15	public	7	use	10
	population	14	average	7	retire	9
	Florida	14	big	7	spending	9
	plan	14	full	7	support	9
	California	14	free	6	depend	9
45	baby	13	general	6	become	9
	plans	13	higher	6	attract	9
	others	13	increasing	6	find	9
	life	13	bigger	6	lost	9
	work	13	aging	6	keep	9
50	taxes	12	annual	6	must	9
	spouses	12	civilian	6	made	9
	savings	12	lower-income	6	expect	8
	payments	12	low	6	go	8
	boomers	12	only	6	increase	8
55	business	12	small	6	did	8
	children	12	upper-income	5	spending	8
	companies	12	wealthy	5	seen	8
	city	11	post-1970	5	rely	8
	generation	11	potential	5	put	8

60	residents	11	prospective	5	promised	8
	states	11	longer	5	raise	7
	thousands	11	major	5	tend	7
	teachers	11	national	5	does	7
	volunteers	11	part-time	5	cut	7
65	way	11	senior	5	costs	7
	family	10	disabled	5	consider	7
	jobs	10	attractive	5	being	7
	investors	9	economic	5	buy	7
	homes	9	empty	5	includes	7
70	force	9	estimated	4	increases	7
	millions	9	existing	4	going	7
	mr	9	good	4	getting	7
	tourists	9	expensive	4	give	7
	programs	9	important	4	given	7
75	professionals	8	individual	4	paid	7
	vacationers	8	initial	4	left	7
	numbers	8	huge	4	let	7
	new	8	healthy	4	leave	6
	home	8	additional	4	leaving	6
80	influx	8	difficult	4	offer	6
	cost	8	conservative	4	meet	6
	employers	8	available	4	enjoy	6
	county	7	civil	4	face	6
	couples	7	comfortable	4	feel	6
85	cost-of-living	7	common	4	got	6
	costs	7	corporate	4	having	6
	cuts	7	similar	4	based	6
	billion	7	retired	4	believe	6
	artists	7	rich	4	cover	6
90	ages	7	total	4	taking	6
	growth	7	typical	4	talk	6
	funds	7	unemployed	4	providing	6

	officials	7	united	4	pays	6
	part	7	vast	4	receiving	6
95	majority	7	special	4	replace	6
	York	7	larger	4	think	6
	taxpayers	7	professional	4	worked	6
	question	7	personal	3	working	6
	shareholders	7	political	3	require	5
100	spending	6	poor	3	return	5
total		1775		1037		1936

spoken	
per million	3,0
frequency	247
fiction	
per million	0,6
frequency	48
magazine	
per million	7,0
frequency	585
newspaper	
per million	11,4
frequency	906
academic	
per million	3,5
frequency	281
1990-1994	
per million	5,5
frequency	569
1995-1999	
per million	3,8
frequency	389

2000-2004	
per million	4,8
frequency	496
2005-2009	
per million	6,7
frequency	637

Appendix Table 7: retired as an adjective

		nominal collocates +/- 5	frequency	adjectival collocates +/- 5	frequency	verbal collocates +/- 5	frequency
retired.[j*]							
100 most frequent		of 7735	of 28807	of 1325		4401 of 1628	of 7590
CHECKED	1	General	506	American	276	is	685
		Army	395	military	212	said	393
		teacher	309	marine	122	was	349
		association	276	high	68	says	343
	5	Officer	267	other	65	are	206
		Colonel	266	senior	64	has	178
		persons	246	active	62	had	143
		air	215	retired	60	have	141
		Professor	202	national	59	`s	141
	10	force	201	federal	58	`m	119
		school	174	old	55	were	98
		officers	152	public	40	be	75
		executive	148	social	40	been	67
		people	144	general	39	would	63
	15	police	142	chief	39	died	59
		worker	141	vice	37	lives	54

	navy	140	naval	35	will	51
	John	128	supreme	34	named	50
	engineer	121	hnew	30	living	48
20	U.S.	115	major	30	do	46
	gen	115	postal	28	worked	37
	Lieutenant	112	foreign	27	am	35
	generals	107	current	25	told	33
	president	106	political	24	can	33
25	father	89	medical	24	did	32
	Admiral	88	older	23	lived	32
	Judge	86	civil	23	know	29
	director	83	corporate	21	made	28
	service	83	special	21	served	28
30	years	83	English	20	working	27
	manager	78	black	20	being	26
	new	77	democratic	18	could	26
	employees	74	four-star	18	does	25
	city	72	good	17	headed	25
35	couple	72	British	17	say	25
	Mr	71	international	17	`re	23
	university	71	local	16	asked	23
	workers	71	real	16	found	22
	chief	70	rear	16	spent	22
40	agent	69	petty	15	took	22
	william	69	assistant	15	got	21
	james	68	elderly	15	get	20
	pilot	68	young	15	joined	20
	corps	67	69-year-old	14	called	20
45	schoolteacher	67	elementary	13	led	19
	state	66	great	13	've	19
	chairman	64	professional	13	turned	18
	sergeant	62	registered	12	helped	18
	occupation	62	secret	12	recalls	18

50	nurse	62	small	12	became	18
	employee	61	electrical	12	`d	17
	department	60	62-year-old	12	live	17
	husand	60	big	12	met	17
	Robert	59	white	12	taught	17
55	York	59	68-year-old	11	see	17
	FBI	58	associated	11	moved	16
	official	58	electric	11	`ll	16
	Washington	58	financial	11	call	16
	editor	57	united	11	come	15
60	col	57	private	11	hired	15
	commander	57	official	11	take	15
	court	57	longtime	11	works	14
	teachers	57	joint	11	may	14
	detective	56	Iraqi	10	put	14
65	health	55	meachanical	10	began	14
	lawyer	55	nuclear	10	played	13
	Richard	55	superior	10	might	13
	justice	54	French	10	include	13
	captain	53	episcopal	10	work	13
70	members	53	disabled	10	think	13
	men	53	annual	10	started	13
	clark	51	77-year-old	10	should	13
	man	51	60-year-old	10	turn	12
	players	51	cenral	10	look	12
75	Jr	50	chemical	10	came	12
	Powell	50	wealthy	10	make	11
	group	49	younger	9	go	11
	business	49	65-year-old	9	retired	11
	David	48	75-year-old	9	used	11
80	driver	46	80-year-old	9	talk	11
	government	45	southern	9	spoke	11
	wife	45	married	9	wrote	10

	Jim	44	legal	9	give	10
	Jack	44	late	9	heard	10
85	Dr	43	long	8	help	10
	Bill	43	methodist	8	included	10
	US	43	native	8	looking	10
	time	43	presidential	8	looks	10
	secretary	43	part-time	8	knew	10
90	san	43	typical	8	ca	10
	Lt	43	recent	8	bought	10
	member	43	63-year-ol	8	calls	9
	county	42	distinguished	8	appointed	9
	Colin	41	fellow	8	left	9
95	Charles	41	wooden	8	reported	9
	owner	41	free	7	raised	9
	Wesley	41	79-year-ol	7	read	9
	principal	40	70-year-old	7	pay	9
	executives	39	bad	7	need	9
100	insurance	39	administrative	7	writes	9
total		9103		2437		4661

spoken	
per million	15,2
frequency	1241
fiction	
per million	6,6
frequency	522
magazine	
per million	20,4
frequency	1695
newspaper	
per million	44,8

frequency	3554
academic	
per million	9,7
frequency	766
1990-1994	
per million	20,3
frequency	2100
1995-1999	
per million	17,2
frequency	1770
2000-2004	
per million	21,0
frequency	2149
2005-2009	
per million	19,8
frequency	1852

Appendix Table 8: aged as an adjective

	nominal collocates +/- 5	frequency	adjectival collocates +/- 5	frequency	verbal collocates +/- 5	frequency
aged.[j*]						
100 most frequent	of 2659	of 5134	of 902	of 1832	of 1012	of 2232
	1 children		77 middle		133 is	110
	cheese		64 young		27 was	90
	man		58 white		26 are	65
	parents		48 old		25 were	54
	5 garlic		48 infirm		25 be	49
	home		47 other		24 have	44

	people	42	poor	24	had	39
	school	41	disabled	23	's	24
	homes	41	black	22	has	23
10	care	40	aged	18	would	19
	students	35	blind	17	made	18
	population	35	red	17	can	17
	women	34	Hebrew	16	said	17
	men	29	elementary	15	could	16
15	cheeses	28	Jewish	14	been	15
	woman	27	new	14	says	15
	years	26	older	13	see	14
	extract	25	elderly	13	will	14
	face	23	fresh	11	care	14
20	mother	21	balsamic	11	looked	13
	look	21	sick	11	found	13
	college	20	traditional	11	make	12
	father	19	high	10	look	11
	manure	18	large	9	may	11
25	life	17	medical	9	do	10
	vinegar	17	national	8	should	10
	gouda	17	primary	8	provide	9
	wood	17	prime	8	did	9
	goat	16	low	8	caring	8
30	health	15	great	8	being	8
	wine	15	blue	8	get	8
	cheddar	14	good	7	take	8
	child	13	growing	7	using	7
	center	13	little	7	seemed	7
35	compost	13	preschool	7	help	7
	persons	13	younger	7	does	7
	percent	12	wooden	7	become	6
	males	12	similar	7	include	6
	study	12	social	6	makes	6

40	relatives	11	warm	6	say	6
	aging	11	human	6	`m	6
	appearance	11	bright	6	used	6
	beef	10	early	6	think	6
	days	10	dry	5	seen	5
45	city	10	common	5	seem	5
	group	10	dependent	5	wearing	5
	groups	10	Catholic	5	live	5
	family	10	American	5	know	5
	eyes	10	green	5	painted	5
50	York	10	general	5	give	5
	way	9	whole	5	given	5
	studies	9	total	5	am	5
	skin	9	sweet	5	called	5
	new	9	small	5	brought	5
55	parent	8	single	4	benefit	4
	status	8	short	4	come	4
	time	8	roasted	4	comes	4
	research	8	wise	4	agreed	4
	rehabilitation	8	grated	4	began	4
60	females	8	hard	4	doing	4
	gruyere	8	immigrant	4	considered	4
	hair	8	processed	4	died	4
	cup	8	public	4	find	4
	color	8	physical	4	finished	4
65	aunt	8	only	4	held	4
	adults	8	nice	4	having	4
	work	8	nontraditional	4	grated	4
	youth	8	ancient	4	grew	4
	walls	7	ailing	4	passed	4
70	age	7	colored	4	named	4
	house	7	dead	4	offer	4
	immigrants	7	frail	4	opened	4

	day	7	friendly	4	left	4
	door	7	front	4	`ll	4
75	effect	7	financial	4	mean	4
	quality	7	frequent	3	want	4
	sisters	7	ethnic	3	worn	4
	things	7	crumbling	3	work	4
	voice	7	crumbly	3	seems	4
80	patina	7	cultural	3	provided	4
	others	7	different	3	remember	4
	oak	7	Chinese	3	reported	4
	leaders	7	average	3	try	4
	king	7	beautiful	3	use	4
85	needs	7	best	3	support	4
	milk	6	mental	3	stored	3
	pecorino	6	natural	3	suggest	3
	person	6	parmesan	3	stood	3
	pine	6	private	3	showed	3
90	poverty	6	protestant	3	sitting	3
	stone	6	higher	3	standing	3
	stage	6	high-school	3	turned	3
	salt	6	greater	3	`ve	3
	room	6	long	3	told	3
95	hispanics	6	late	3	talking	3
	individuals	6	lean	3	taking	3
	hands	6	living	3	thought	3
	help	6	ill	3	respect	3
	glass	6	Indian	3	reflect	3
100	air	6	worn-out	3	reflected	3
total		1553		879		1081

spoken

per million	1,4
frequency	117
fiction	
per million	6,2
frequency	488
magazine	
per million	6,0
frequency	497
newspaper	
per million	4,0
frequency	315
academic	
per million	7,3
frequency	581
1990-1994	
per million	6,5
frequency	667
1995-1999	
per million	4,9
frequency	501
2000-2004	
per million	3,9
frequency	402
2005-2009	
per million	4,6
frequency	435

Appendix Table 9: aged as noun

	nominal collocates +/- 5	frequency	adjectival collocates +/- 5	frequency	verbal collocates +/- 5	frequency
aged.[n*]						
100 most frequent	of 4	of 4	of 3	of 3	no results	
	1 balance		1 degenerative		1	
	bird		1 ocular		1	
	plot		1 second-growth		1	
	variation		1			
	5					
	10					
	...					
	95					
	100					
total			4		3	
spoken						
per million		0,0				
frequency		0				
fiction						
per million		0,0				

frequency	0
magazine	
per million	0,0
frequency	0
newspaper	
per million	0,0
frequency	0
academic	
per million	0,0
frequency	2
1990-1994	
per million	0,0
frequency	1
1995-1999	
per million	0,0
frequency	1
2000-2004	
per million	0,0
frequency	0
2005-2009	
per million	0,0
frequency	0

Appendix Table 10: positive, negative and neutral +/- 5 co-textual entries of all queries

	elderly n	elderly adj	elders	retiree	retired adj.
total					
collocates	29	6388	3478	1839	7735
total of 100	29	100	100	100	100
negative	7	10	1	6	0
positive	0	2	21	4	1
neutral	22	88	78	90	99
medical	6	16	5	6	3
	sen. Citizen	aged n	aged adj	pensioner	
total					
collocates	1491	4	2659	309	
total of 100	100	4	100	100	
negative	0	0	2	4	
positive	1	0	2	5	
neutral	99	100	96	91	
medical	7	0	4	6	

	elderly n	elderly adj	elders	retiree	retired adj.
total					
collocates	8	2142	1192	650	1325
total of 100	8	100	100	100	100
negative	1	19	10	8	2
positive	0	3	8	11	7
neutral	7	78	82	91	91
medical	0	11	5	2	2
	sen. Citizen	aged n	aged adj	pensioner	
total					
collocates	433	3	902	105	
total of 100	100	3	100	100	
negative	11	1	14	18	
positive	8	0	6	7	
neutral	81	2	80	75	
medical	10	1	12	3	

Appendix Table 11: diachronic distribution selected queries in the COCA

	1990-1994	pm	1995-1999	pm	2000-2004	pm	2005-2009	pm
elderly as adj	3729	36,1	2801	27,2	2368	23,1	2080	22,2
elderly as noun	4	0,0	3	0,0	3	0,0	5	0,1
senior citizen	117	1,1	118	1,1	106	1,0	67	0,7
senior citizens	484	4,7	483	4,7	496	4,8	339	3,6
aged as adj	667	6,5	501	4,9	402	3,9	435	4,6
aged as noun	1	0,0	1	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0
retired as adj.	2100	20,3	1770	17,2	2149	21,0	1852	19,8
retired as noun	2	0,0	2	0,0	2	0,0	6	0,1
retiree as noun	177	1,7	117	1,1	173	1,7	236	2,5
elders as noun	1455	14,1	971	9,4	1123	10,9	945	10,1
elder as adj.	562	5,4	441	4,3	474	4,6	343	3,7
elder as noun	637	6,2	501	4,9	667	6,5	600	6,4
pensioner	34	0,3	21	0,2	12	0,1	14	0,1
total	9969	96,4	7730	75,0	7975	77,6	6922	73,9

Appendix Table 12: Sectional distribution of selected queries in the COCA with color codes for especially high (red) and low (blue) frequencies

	spoken	pm	fiction	pm	magazine	pm	newspaper	pm	academic	pm
elderly as adj	1428	17,5	1516	19,3	2575	30,9	2235	28,2	3158	39,8
elderly as noun	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	14	0,2
senior citizen	86	1,1	42	0,5	75	0,9	159	2	42	0,5
senior citizens	416	5,1	60	0,8	282	3,4	911	11,5	122	1,5
aged as adj	117	1,4	488	6,2	497	6,0	315	4,0	581	7,3
aged as noun	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	2	0,0
retired as adj.	1241	15,2	522	6,6	1695	20,4	3554	44,8	766	9,7
retired as noun	5	0,1	1	0,0	0	0,0	2	0,0	4	0,1
retiree as noun	247	3,0	48	0,6	585	7,0	906	11,4	281	3,5
elders as noun	441	5,4	582	7,4	804	9,7	504	6,4	2144	27,0
elder as adj.	145	1,8	422	5,4	402	4,8	364	4,6	479	6,0
elder as noun	156	1,9	477	6,1	547	6,6	637	8	577	7,3
pensioner	10	0,1	21	0,3	24	0,3	16	0,2	10	0,1
total	4292	52,6	4179	53,2	7487	90,0	9603	121,1	8180	103,0

Zusammenfassung

"The textual construction of the elderly" ist eine Arbeit, die Altern, alte Menschen und deren Wahrnehmung durch die Gesellschaft aus verschiedenen Blickwinkeln zu beleuchten versucht. Nach einem kurzen Überblick über die Situation von alten Menschen in industriellen Gebieten als auch anderen Teilen der Welt, einer Diskussion über stereotypische Wahrnehmung von Alter in bestimmten Kulturen, und der Mediendebatte über den Anstieg des Pensionsalters auf Grund von steigender Lebenserwartung und finanziellen Gründen, werden die Funktionen alter Menschen für ihre jeweilige Gesellschaft und Familie zum Thema und etwaige Änderungen für die Zukunft in den Raum gestellt.

Durch eine Corpus Analyse von Synonymen und +/- 5 Worten vor und nach definierten Worten, wie zum Beispiel *elderly*, *elders*, *senior citizen(s)*, um einige zu nennen, konnte eine Einschätzung des semantischen Einflusses der Collocationen auf die Meinung der Gesellschaft skizziert werden. Die Analyse zeigt deutlich, dass Worte, die eigentlich synonym oder fast synonym erscheinen in der Verwendung gravierende Unterschiede aufweisen. So sind eigentlich euphemistisch intendierte Ausdrücke teilweise eher abwertend gebraucht. Inwiefern der Gebrauch von Sprache die Meinung der Gesellschaft über alte Menschen, beziehungsweise, die Identität der alten Menschen selbst beeinflusst kann nur gemutmaßt werden, auf Grund von Diversen Theorien, die Sprache eindeutig als Repräsentationsinstrument identifizieren, und weiters Identität eindeutig mit Repräsentation in Zusammenhang steht, kann der Einfluss von Sprache auf Meinung allerdings für gegeben betrachtet werden.

Da durch die Corpus Analyse, auf Grund von einigen Einschränkungen einer quantitativen Analyse, und den Unsicherheiten die damit einhergehen auch nur ein eingeschränkter Eindruck der sprachlichen Auswirkungen entstehen kann, und man nicht von einer wahren Interpretation sprechen kann, wurde zusätzlich eine qualitative Analyse von Werbungen aus dem Printbereich durchgeführt.

Dabei hat sich herausgestellt, dass wider Erwarten Alter entweder eher ins lächerliche gezogen wird, oder als erstrebenswert, oder unerstrebenswert dargestellt wird, und die Produktgattungen in deren Werbung das Konzept Alter verwendet wird nicht klar definierbar sind. Dabei ist auffällig, dass oft ein Widerspruch zwischen Wort und Bild stattfindet und ebendieser Widerspruch genau diese Lächerlichkeit auf Kosten von alten Menschen erzeugt.

Alles in Allem kann auf Grund der gewonnenen Eindrücke durch die Analysen festgestellt werden, dass die Darstellung von Alter, alten Menschen und Altern durch Dritte eher negative als positive ist. Ob das tatsächlich auch Auswirkung auf Meinung und Verhalten der Gesellschaft gegenüber alten Menschen hat, kann nicht mit Sicherheit bestätigt werden, ist aber bis zu einem gewissen Grad anzunehmen.

Lebenslauf

Michaela Germann

Persönliche Daten

Geburtsdatum: 13. Oktober 1983

Geburtsort: Graz

Familienstand: ledig

Staatsbürgerschaft: Österreich

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Praktische Erfahrung

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Sprachkenntnisse:

Deutsch	Muttersprache
Englisch	sehr gute Kenntnisse
Französisch	gute Kenntnisse
Portugiesisch	Grundkenntnisse

Forschungsinteressen:

Linguistik	Soziolinguistik, Sprache und Identität, Discourse Analysis, Corpus Linguistik
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